

PAUL'S ETHICS AND FEMINISM IN LIGHT OF I CORINTHIANS

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ABSTRACT

The woman's movement has created a storm of controversy over Paul's stance on the role of women in the church. Many traditional theologians have assumed that Paul advocated a patriarchial order for the church. They cite I Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36 as the justification for excluding women from leadership roles in the church. Christian feminists, however, contend that Paul was a staunch defender of equality. They claim that Galatians 3:27-28 is the criterion by which all of Paul's statements on women should be evaluated. In the midst of the confusion over how to interpret Paul, many Christians have chosen simply to ignore Paul's writings on women.

Numerous attempts have been made to clarify Paul's stand on women's role in the church. Biblical scholars have tried to delete the passages from I Corinthians which ask women to be silent or to wear veils in church. Historians have discounted Paul's comments on women as mere reflections of his Hellenistic-Jewish background. Theologians have blamed his eschatology and his disinterest in theoretical ethics as the reasons for his apparent contradictions. Each of these 'solutions' is, however, either inconclusive or directly contradicts Paul's theological principles.

A more fruitful approach is to analyze these statements as part of Paul's ethics. Paul, like his late contemporary Plutarch, was a therapeutic ethicist. He approached ethics, not as a theorist, but as a physician of the soul. He was primarily interested in practical problems, emphasizing the relationship between the soul and behavior, while assuming that everyone was morally ill and in need of constant

therapy. From these presuppositions, both Plutarch and Paul developed four basic ethical strategies. These strategies emphasize: the necessity to adjust prescriptions to the sensitivities of the people involved, the wide range of resources available to the ethicist, the fallibility of popular opinions, and the possibility of exceptions.

Paul's ethics differs from Plutarch's in that Paul is primarily concerned with the growth of the church rather than personal development. He envisions the church as the Body of Christ. This corporate image of the church was adopted from Graeco-Roman philosophers and religious traditions. The principles of freedom, order and sacrificial love are defined by the apostle in regard to their functions within the Body of Christ. For Paul, freedom is the ability to use one's spiritual gifts to serve the church. Order is simply the peaceful functioning of each member within the Body of Christ. Christian love, as exemplified by the cross, is a gift of the Spirit enabling each Christian to encourage each other's gifts and use his or her freedom responsibly.

Paul's therapeutic community-based ethics offers an excellent model for solving many of our contemporary problems over the role of women in the church. Paul does not advocate a patriarchy nor a loose communion of self-actualizing individuals. The apostle affirms both the need for freedom and order in the church. His presuppositions and strategies are a way of ensuring the freedom of every member to use his or her spiritual gifts without destroying the church in the process.

PREFACE

The following study analyzes Paul's statements about the role of women in the church in light of his therapeutic community-based ethics. I am convinced that the advocates of male superiority and the proponents of women's liberation have unfairly claimed the apostle as their friend or foe on the basis of isolated texts. They have almost totally ignored his ethics because it does not resemble classical or modern ethical systems.

Paul's does, however, have an ethical system which is quite similar to that of his late contemporary Plutarch. By comparing the way each of these men approaches moral problems, I have drawn out three presuppositions and four basic strategies which they have in common. These presuppositions and strategies not only reveal Paul's stance on the role of women in the church, but offer a model for solving our contemporary struggles in the church with freedom and order.

In this study I have purposely avoided discussing the relationship of a Christian wife to her husband. I agree with Paul Jewett's definition of patriarchialism, in which all women are continually addressed as wives in every situation. This study is focused only on the role of women in the church, not on their familial relationships. Paul's understanding of marriage is a fascinating topic, but one that does not immediately relate to the role of women in their service to the church.

I have also avoided using citations from epistles that have been attributed to Paul in the past, but are now labelled as deutero-Pauline. I am not totally convinced of the arguments against Paul's authorship

of several of these letters, notably II Thessalonians, but for the sake of consensus, I have only referred to epistles which are generally accepted as Pauline.

In discussing sexual equality for women in the church I have defined the term rather narrowly. Equality for women is having the same opportunities to use their gifts in the church as men do. The political and social ramifications of equal opportunities in the church are not addressed in this study, because they did not immediately concern Paul. However, the effects of full participation in the church by women will, undoubtedly, be felt in the society at large and in the political process.

I wish to thank Hans Dieter Betz and Dan Rhoades for their untiring support in this project. Their criticisms and encouragements have been invaluable. I am also very grateful to my colleagues, and to the students at the University of Redlands, the staff of the Armacost Library, my technical assistant, Lisa Schultz, and my typist, Margaret Austin, for their interest, advice, and help.

Finally, I dedicate this study to my beloved husband and editor, John Arras, and to our two daughters Melissa and Marina. They have loved me when I was too tired to respond, and helped me to laugh at myself when I became too serious.

CHAPTER I

DIVERGENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PAUL

INTRODUCTION

Spurred on by the present emphasis on sexual equality, women are increasingly seeking ordination and leadership positions in the church. Both the advocates of women's liberation and its opponents have turned to the epistles of Paul for their support. The Christian feminists claim that Paul is a staunch defender of sexual equality in the church. Their opposition asserts that Paul advocates a patriarchal order for the church. In the crossfire it has become difficult to discern what Paul is really saying. Thus, many people have chosen to ignore his position on women or dismiss it as irrelevant.

The feminists are fond of quoting Galatians 3:27-28: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is no male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."¹ On the basis of this text they build their case for sexual equality in the church. In their eyes, "Paul is, far from being a chauvinist, the only certain and consistent spokesman for the liberation and equality of women in the New Testament."²

¹All of the quotations from Scripture will be from the R.S.V. unless noted otherwise. This translation is my own, based on The Greek New Testament, ed. Kurt Aland and others (2d.ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1968)

²Robin Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XL (September 1972), 283.

The advocates of male supremacy focus their attention on I Corinthians rather than on Galatians. They remind the liberationists that the apostle did ask women to be silent in church.³ Thus, they interpret "equality in Christ," as eschatological and spiritual, not social and political. Women validate their God-given freedom by accepting the place they have been assigned here on earth. Consequently, subordination is not seen as a denial of "freedom in Christ," but an affirmation of God's sovereign will which ordained that women be inferior to men, according to the will of God.⁴

In this dispute Paul emerges as a Janus-faced ethicist who alternately affirms and denies sexual equality in the church. His apparent ambivalence has made him an easy target for criticism. G.B. Shaw labeled Paul the "eternal enemy of women."⁵ But Elaine Pagels' sympathetic interpretation of Paul is even more damning. She sees him as the defender of the double standard--abolishing kosher laws for the sake of religious liberty, but upholding social, political and marital laws that deny women their freedom in Christ.⁶

³I Cor. 14:33b.

⁴Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961), III/4, 174; C.T. Craig, "I Corinthians," in Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), 213.

⁵G.B. Shaw "Monsterous Imposition on Jesus," in W.A. Meeks (ed.) The Writings of St. Paul (New York: Norton, 1972), 299.

⁶Elaine H. Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XLII, 3 (September 1974), 545.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Numerous scholars from diverse disciplines have attempted to clarify Paul's position on women. Biblical scholars, such as Robin Scroggs and William Walker, contend that the text is the culprit. They challenge the authenticity of I Cor. 14:33b-36 and even 11:2-12. It is these post-Pauline insertions, they argue, which have portrayed Paul as a male chauvinist. Once these disturbing passages are expurgated, Paul is revealed to be the defender of sexual equality. Thus, they believe that the confusion over Paul's stand on the role of women in the church revolves around the question of authorship.⁷

Elaine Pagels and Alan Cumming claim that the confusion does not center around authorship, but rather around our limited understanding of Paul. We forget that he was a man who was deeply influenced by both his Hellenistic Jewish culture and his expectations of the parousia. They contend that Paul's past and his vision of the future determined his 'ambivalent' position on sexual equality.⁸

Finally, the ethicists present us with the simplest and most compelling of all the attempted solutions. They believe that the problem lies neither in the text nor in Paul's past or vision of the

⁷Scroggs, pp. 283-303; Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XLII, 3 (September 1974), 532-37; William O. Walker, Jr., "I Corinthians 11:2-16 and Paul's Views Regarding Women," Journal of Biblical Literature, XCIV, 1 (March 1975), 94-110.

⁸Alan Cumming, "Pauline Christianity and Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXXIV (1973), 517-28; Pagels, pp. 538-549; Jack T. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 47-66; Ernest DeWitt Burton, The Epistle to the Galatians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 206.

future. We are confused over Paul's varied statements on sexual equality precisely because we expect him to be consistent. Victor Furnish, Jack Sanders, Mary Andrews and even Elaine Pagels doubt whether Paul considered himself to be an ethicist. They value his theology and his concern for the unique problems of the Gentile churches; but they do not regard him as an ethical theorist. Paul's paratextual sections about women are merely timely exhortations aimed at particular problems in the church of Corinth. It is unfair to expect his comments about the Corinthian problems to apply to the problems in America in the twentieth century. It is our responsibility to create ethical systems from his theological presuppositions, for, after all, Paul was a theologian, not an ethicist.⁹

Each of these proposals offers an attractive solution to the problem of Paul's stance on women's role in the church. But on careful examination each attempt appears either strained or incapable of explaining certain aspects of the problem. A fresh approach seems to be required. I suggest that Paul's views on women can best be understood if they are seen as part of his therapeutic community-based ethics. But before I present such an approach, we should examine exactly why the other attempts have failed.

The Literary-Critical Solution

The Argument Against I Corinthians 14:33b-36. I Corinthians 14:33b-36 is a difficult passage to understand. Why would Paul ask the

⁹Victor Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 208-213; Mary Andrews, The Ethical Teaching of St. Paul (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), pp. 37-39.

Corinthian women to be silent in church, after he has just cautioned them to wear their veils when they preach and prophesy?¹⁰ Hans Conzelmann and Robin Scroggs contend that this passage is an obvious contradiction to Paul's general endorsement of women as leaders in the church. The solution to this inconsistency is to simply dismiss I Cor. 14:33b-36 as a post-Pauline interpolation.¹¹ William Walker goes even further in claiming that the advice given to women concerning their veils and the short "midrash" on Genesis 2 in I Cor. 11:2-16 are also post-Pauline insertions.¹² According to these commentators, I Cor. 14:33b-36 and possibly parts of 11:2-16 are later intrusions into the epistle which reflect "the bourgeois consolidation of the church, roughly on the level of the Pastoral Epistles."¹³ These passages are, therefore, inconsistent with Paul's proclamation of sexual equality, as evidenced in Galatians 3:27-28, because they were not written by Paul but by a later editor who did not share the apostle's commitment to equality in Christ.

Verses 33b-36 in chapter 14 of I Corinthians have long been subject to dispute.¹⁴ On aesthetic grounds the passage has been denounced because, "it interrupts the theme of prophecy and spoils the flow of thought."¹⁵ A more damaging objection is that the passage appears flatly to contradict I Cor. 11:5, "where the active participation of women in the church is presupposed."¹⁶

¹⁰I Cor. 11:5. ¹¹Hans Conzelmann, I Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 246; Robin Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 284.

¹²Walker, pp. 94-110. ¹³Conzelmann, p. 246. ¹⁴Walker, p. 94, n.6.

¹⁵Conzelmann, p. 246. ¹⁶Conzelmann, p. 246.

The early manuscripts of I Corinthians support the criticisms of these scholars. Walker points out that,

Codex Claromontanus (D) and certain related Western MSS have vss. 34-35 at the close of ch. 14, which suggests that they have originated as a marginal gloss and been inserted later into the text at different places.¹⁷

Eduard Schweizer similarly concludes that 14:34-35 is the work of a later copyist who was perhaps trying to fight gnosticism by appealing to Paul as the father of church discipline. The appeal to the law in vs. 34 likewise seems more like a reference from the Pastoral epistles than a statement from the indisputable Pauline texts. Also the use of the word "permit" ($\epsilon\pi\iota\pi\rho\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega$) reflects the style of I Timothy 2:12 but takes on a different meaning in the Pauline epistles.¹⁸ Even the idea of female subordination can be attributed to I Timothy, rather than the Pauline epistles.¹⁹

The Argument Against I Corinthians 11:2-16. Although many biblical scholars consider chapter 14:33b-36 to be a post-Pauline insertion, they have generally, though reluctantly, accepted the obscure arguments in 11:2-16 as authentically Pauline.²⁰

¹⁷Walker, p. 95, n. 6.

¹⁸Eduard Schweizer, "The Service of Worship: An Exposition of I Corinthians 14," Interpretation, XIII (October 1959), 402.

¹⁹Compare I Cor. 11:33b-36 with I Tim. 2:11-12; Walker, p. 95, n. 6.

²⁰Meeks, p. 38, n. 9; Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 297.

William Walker, however, disagrees with his colleagues. I Corinthians 11:2-16, he contends, is as much of a post-Pauline insertion as chapter 14:33b-36. He attributes the confusion and obscurity to the fact that the passage is actually three separate pericopae which have been jumbled and awkwardly inserted into the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians by a later editor.²¹

Walker concedes that "there is no direct evidence for regarding I Corinthians 11:2-16 as an interpolation;"²² nevertheless, circumstantial evidence seems to indicate that there may have been some editorial work done on this passage. Walker points to the repetition of "commend" (*Ἐπαίνω*) which frames the supposed insertion. In vs. 2, Paul commends the Corinthians for their fidelity to the traditions he taught them. In vs. 17, the same word is used to chastise them for misusing the traditions he gave them concerning the Lord's Supper. Walker believes that this duplication of *Ἐπαίνω* indicates that a later editor attempted to weave a self-contained section on the relationship of men to women into this chapter.²³

A second piece of circumstantial evidence is the textual variations of vs. 17a. Walker contends that these variants indicate that, "various editors or copyists have attempted in different ways to improve what must originally have been a rather rough transition to vs. 17b."²⁴ His hypothesis that vss. 2-16 (or 3-16) are an interpretation would explain these slight textual variations.²⁵

²¹Walker, pp. 94-110. ²²Walker, p. 98. ²³Walker, p. 98.

²⁴Walker, p. 98. ²⁵cf. Conzelmann, p. 192, n.1.

But the cornerstone of Walker's argument against the authenticity of I Corinthians 11:2-16 is that it disrupts the context of the entire section of the letter. He considers the discussion of the role of women in the church and their relationship to men as totally unrelated to the theme of chapters 8-11. According to Walker, these three chapters are devoted exclusively to matters of "eating" and "drinking."²⁶

Walker devotes the second half of his work on I Corinthians 11:2-16 to his unique hypothesis that this passage is actually three post-Pauline pericopae which have been jumbled and inserted into chapter eleven. Pericope "A" includes vss. 3, 8-9. "B" starts with vss. 4-7 and is traced through vss. 10, 13 and 16. The remaining verses, 14 and 15, form pericope "C".²⁷

The argument in support of this tripartite division of the passage is long and complex. What is primarily of interest to us is not so much Walker's reconstruction of vss. 2-16, but the reasons he gives for labeling each of them as post-Pauline. He establishes three separate criteria. The first test measures the ideological similarity of the passage with the generally accepted works of Paul. "A," "B" and "C" fail this test because they advocate "male priority and female subordination," thereby contradicting Galatians 3:27-28.²⁸ "C" also violates the first test because Walker contends that the concept of "being taught by nature," in vs. 14 is a Stoic idea foreign to Paul.²⁹

²⁶Walker, p. 99. ²⁷Walker, p. 101. ²⁸Walker, p. 104.

²⁹Walker, p. 107.

The second criterion is based on Paul's "interests." Walker cannot conceive of Paul being interested in such trivia as headcoverings in vss. 3, 8-9 and the length of men's hair in vss. 12-15.³⁰

Walker's final measure of authenticity is "tone and vocabulary."³¹ All of the so-called pericopae in vss. 2-16 fail this last test. The style and vocabulary of this passage remind Walker of the pastoral letters. He points to words such as head ($\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\eta'$) and glory ($\delta\alpha\xi\alpha$) which are used in a more limited sense in the undisputed texts. He claims that these words have the same connotations in this passage as they do in Colossians and Ephesians.³² Thus, it is likely that they were written by a later theologian, reflecting the concerns of the post-apostolic church.

After this lengthy and detailed attack on the authenticity of I Corinthians 11:2-16, Walker sums up his argument:

There is simply nothing else like this passage, in tone or in vocabulary or in content, anywhere in the undoubtedly authentic writings, but it shows many similarities to the pseudo-Pauline writings.³³

The editors of I Corinthians are shown to be the chauvinists, not Paul. According to Walker, Scroggs and Schweizer, if we purge I Corinthians 14:33b-36 and possibly 11:2-16 from the text, Paul emerges as the defender of sexual equality and a master of consistency. The only direct statement on the role of women in the church that can thus be attributed to Paul is Galatians 3:27-28, "which insists on absolute equality in Christ."³⁴

³⁰Walker, p. 106. ³¹Walker, p. 104. ³²Walker, pp. 105-107.

³³Walker, p. 108. ³⁴Walker, p. 109; Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatalogical Woman," p. 283; Schweizer, p. 402.

According to these scholars the problem over Paul's position on women dissolves once the text is purged of later additions. But, does the evidence conclusively support expelling 14:33b-36 and 11:2-16 from I Corinthians? Or is the combined argument against both passages merely a patchwork of fragmentary evidence stitched together by good-will and a concern for equality in the church?

Critique of the Literary Critical Solution

The Argument For I Corinthians 14:33b-36. The dispute over I Corinthians 14:33b-36 is hardly as settled as many biblical scholars suppose.³⁵ Although there is not enough evidence to prove its authenticity, the charges against this passage seem somewhat inconclusive. Let us examine its allegedly disruptive, contradictory content to see if its manuscript variations really indicate that it belongs to the Pastoral school rather than the Pauline corpus.

Conzelmann's first argument against 14:33b-36 is that it "interrupts the theme of prophecy"³⁶ in the fourteenth chapter. But if we examine closely his own analysis of the chapter, Conzelmann designates the upbuilding of the church (*οἰκοδομή*) as the criterion by which everything in the chapter is evaluated. He compares it with the theme of love (*ἀγάπη*) in chapter 13.³⁷ Even in the

³⁵ cf. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of I Corinthians 11:2-16?" Journal of Biblical Literature LXXXV, 4 (December 1976), 615.

³⁶ Conzelmann, p. 246.

³⁷ Conzelmann, p. 233f; cf.; Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyn: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity." History of Religions, XIII, 3 (February 1974), 203.

subsection on 14:20-40, he points out, "the criterion is again the principle of 'edification'."³⁸

If edification of the church is the principle guiding chapter 14, the subject of women talking in church might be quite relevant. Paul might have insisted that the women be silent in church if their talking was disrupting the worship service. In vs. 28, he likewise silenced the glossalalists. They are only permitted to speak in tongues during worship if an interpreter is present. The prophets also are asked to be silent if "a revelation is made to another sitting by."³⁹ Each person is encouraged to use his or her freedom responsibly. The edification of the church, Paul believes, demands that some people restrain themselves during worship services so that the whole congregation may be instructed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem with vss. 33b-36 is not so much that they "break the context of chapter 14,"⁴⁰ but that they seem to contradict chapter 11: 2-16. How can Paul advise women to pray and prophesy veiled and then turn around and ask them to be silent in church? Either vss. 14:33b-36 are a non-Pauline insertion or the passage is nuanced so that praying and prophesying are not covered under Paul's ban on *λαλέω*.

An analysis of these three Greek words indicates that Paul gave each a separate connotation. Praying (*προσεύχομαι*) does not refer to talking with one another, but calling upon God to intercede for ourselves and others.⁴¹ Likewise, prophesy (*προφητεύω*) is

³⁸Conzelmann, p. 244. ³⁹I Cor. 14:30. ⁴⁰Walker, p. 95, n.6.

⁴¹Heinrich Greeven, "*προσεύχομαι*," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 807; Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 720f.

sharply distinguished from common speech, even speaking in tongues.⁴² A prophet proclaims "divine revelation" to the community for the sake of "upbuilding, encouragement and consolation,"⁴³ not for asking questions.

Paul, however, asks women in Corinth not to "speak" (λαλέω), but to save their questions for their husbands at home. This questioning is obviously not a form of prophecy or prayer. It is more like "idle chatter," which was the classical definition of λαλέω.⁴⁴ Although C.K. Barrett accurately points out that the classical use of λαλέω is not generally found in the New Testament,⁴⁵ it is apparent in chapter 14 that Paul used λαλέω to refer to prophecy or prayer only when it was modified by "in tongues" (γλωσσαῖς)⁴⁶ or when the context clearly indicated that the word had a special meaning.⁴⁷

If the upbuilding of the congregation is the criterion of chapter 14, then protecting the worshipers from the idle chatter of questioning women seems as reasonable as limiting glossalalia and the length of prophetic proclamations.⁴⁸ "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace."⁴⁹ In support of this interpretation, Kummel contends that this passage does not apply to women who have been touched with

⁴³Bauer, p. 730; I Cor. 14:3.

⁴⁴Albert Debrunner, "λαλέω," in Kittel, IV, 76f.; Krister Sendahl, The Bible and the Role of Women (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 30.

⁴⁵C.K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 332.

⁴⁶I Cor. 14:2-6, 13, 18. ⁴⁷I Cor. 14:3, 9, 19. ⁴⁸I Cor. 14:27, 31.

⁴⁹I Cor. 14:33.

"the freedom of the Spirit."⁵⁰ The Spirit enables women to pray and prophesy just as it does men. But, Paul argues, this freedom is not to be used to disrupt the church.⁵¹

The manuscript variations of 14:33b-36 indicate that the copyist of the Western text may have shared the discomfort of many of the recent commentators.⁵² But as Conzelmann points out, "The transposition of vs. 34 to follow v. 40 in DG is of course no argument for the assumption of an interpolation."⁵³ A copyist's revision is certainly not sufficient ground to exclude 33b-36 from the Pauline corpus.

The fact that many commentators have pointed out the similarities between these verses and I Timothy 2:11-12⁵⁴ certainly does not prove that they have the same author or general source. Windisch, quite the contrary, suggests that I Timothy "is an elaboration of I Corinthians 14:33b-36 and therefore presupposes its presence in the text from the beginning."⁵⁵

The so-called post-apostolic appeal to the law is also not unusual for Paul. In vs. 21 of chapter 14, Paul asserts, "In the law it is written...." The "law" does not necessarily mean the Judaic rules and regulations. Paul often uses the term to refer to the prophetic and narrative sections of the Torah. In the case of vs. 21, Isaiah 28:11-12

⁵⁰ Werner Georg Kummel cited by Conzelmann, p. 246, n. 58.

⁵¹ I Cor. 14:39; Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne," p. 204.

⁵² Barrett, p. 330. ⁵³ Conzelmann, p. 246, n. 54.

⁵⁴ Conzelmann, p. 246, n. 53; Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman,", p. 284.

⁵⁵ Hans Windisch, "Sinn und Geltung des Apostolischen 'Mulier Traceat in Ecclesia,'" Christliche Welt, XLIV (1930) Cols. 417-420, cited in Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne," p. 203f.

seems to be the obvious allusion.⁵⁶ Many commentators think that Genesis 3:16 may be the referant for vss. 33b-36.⁵⁷

The Argument For I Corinthians 11:2-16. Although the arguments for the authenticity of I Corinthians 14:33b-36 are considerable, they have not swayed many of the contemporary critics. The opposite is true with regard to 11:2-16, where William Walker is the sole support of the argument against this passage. All the other commentators have accepted this troublesome passage as Pauline. Let us examine Walker's "radical surgery"⁵⁸ in order to see if his critics' objections to his criterion are valid.

The first premise that Walker uses to build his case against I Corinthians 11:2-16 is the stylistic repetition of "comment" (ἘΠΙΣΤΑ) γρῶ). He notes that this is a common editorial device used to ease an insertion into a text.⁵⁹ But he fails to mention that this is also a style that is fairly common to Paul.⁶⁰ What is important is not so much the repetition of a verb, but whether the context and style warrant using the verb again.⁶¹ Walker does not demonstrate that the

⁵⁶ The Greek New Testament, p. 610, n. 21.

⁵⁷ Barrett, p. 330, Greek New Testament, p. 611, n. 34.

⁵⁸ Murphy-O'Connor, p. 616.

⁵⁹ Examples include: I Cor. 12:31a, 14:1; 2 Cor. 6:11-13, 7:2-4, cited by Walker, p. 98, n. 23.

⁶⁰ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 294.

⁶¹ cf. Murphy-O'Connor, p. 616.

repetition of $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\omega$ is awkward or unusual for the context or style of the passage.

The textual variants of vs. 17a are the second premise for Walker's argument. The four versions of $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\gamma\; \text{ou}\kappa$ $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\omega$ indicate to him a "rough transition" between the insertion and the Pauline text.⁶² But on close examination we see that the difficulty lies in the combination of the participle $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\gamma$ with the negative $\text{ou}\kappa\; \epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\omega$ in vs. 17a, which is an unusual Greek construction.⁶³ The passage 2-16 is not in any way the cause of the variants.

The heart of Walker's objection to the authenticity of I Corinthians 11:2-16 seems to be the context of the passage, not the style or variants that surround the verses. Walker believes that this section substantially differs from the theme of chapters 8-11. He contends that these chapters are devoted exclusively to the subject of "eating" and "drinking" and that "the roles and relationships of men and women in the church" are totally irrelevant to these chapters.⁶⁴ Walker never explains why he puts these so-called subjects in quotation marks. Perhaps he intends by this marking to indicate that the words encompass both spiritual and physical eating and drinking. That explains the inclusion of the discussions on meat sacrificed to idols (chapter 8 and 10:23ff) and the proper conduct for the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), but it does not explain Paul's lengthy digression on Barnabas' and his concept

⁶² Walker, p. 98.

⁶³ Blass and Debrunner, p. 430(3); Murphy-O'Connor, p. 616.

⁶⁴ Walker, p. 99.

of ministry (9:5-27). Nor does the title "eating" and "drinking" adequately describe 10:7-14 which discusses the evils of idolatry.

I think that the theme of chapters 8-11 is far broader than mere "eating" and "drinking." Strengthening the fellowship by a responsible use of Christian freedom is the principle idea behind this section. Eating and drinking, avoiding idolatry and fornication, Paul's and Barnabus' sacrifices for the sake of the Corinthian congregation and women's careful use of their freedom in church are all examples that illustrate Paul's concept of seeking the benefit of others rather than ourselves.⁶⁵

Walker's misunderstanding of the purpose of these chapters is reflected in the criterion he establishes for the authenticity of the so-called "three pericopae" in vss. 2-16.⁶⁶ The first test requires that the passage be consistent with Galatians 3:28.⁶⁷ This is a perfect example of solving a problem by denying it. Walker does not even attempt to struggle with the complexity of Paul's concept of freedom.⁶⁸ If we followed this rationale we would have to eliminate many other recognized Pauline texts from the Bible. I Corinthians 7:23-24 is an obvious example

⁶⁵I Cor. 10:33.

⁶⁶Murphy-O'Connor points out that Walker never justifies his reconstruction of these verses other than to mention that he feels that they seem "free of many of the difficulties which the passage presents in its combined form." (Walker, p. 101). cited by Murphy-O'Connor, p. 617.

⁶⁷Walker, p. 104.

⁶⁸cf. Hans Dieter Betz, "Paul's Concept of Freedom in the Context of Hellenistic Discussions About the Possibilities of Human Freedom," (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union and University of California, 1977), pp. 1-13.

of Paul encouraging slaves to remain in their present state. How can this be consistent with his statement that in Christ there is no slave nor free person? Likewise, Paul continually mentions how he ministers differently to the Greeks than to the Jews.⁶⁹ How can this be consistent with the abolition of racial distinctions proclaimed in Galatians 3:28?

Walker misunderstands Pauline consistency. For Paul the aim of the Christian life was always the same, building the Body of Christ. But he did not apply the same approach to every situation. He explains his methodology in I Corinthians 9:19-23:

For though I am free from all I have made myself a slave to everyone in order to gain many. And I have become to the Jews as a Jew so I can gain the Jews, to those under the law as one under the law, not being myself under the law, in order that I will gain those under the law. To those without the law as one without the law, not being without the law of God, but in the law of Christ so that I can gain the lawless ones. I have become to the weak, weak in order to gain the weak, I have become everything to everybody in order that by all means I shall save some. But I do everything on account of the gospel so that I will jointly share in it.

A closer look at the situation in Corinth is necessary in order to determine if I Corinthian 11:2-16 is consistent with Paul's primary aim of building the Body of Christ. Galatians 3:28 was an appropriate principle for helping the Galatian church overcome legalism and the influence of Jewish Christians, but it may have been a destructive principle to introduce into the Corinthian congregation which seems to have been carried away with the idea of spiritual freedom.⁷⁰

The other criterion offered by Walker to support his expulsion of I Corinthian 11:2-16 from the Pauline corpus are even more arbitrary than his consistency test. He dismisses vs. 14 and its related verses

⁶⁹I Cor. 11:31. ⁷⁰I Cor. 6:12, 10:23.

because he sees "being taught by nature" as a reference to the Stoic concept of a quasi-divine nature.⁷¹ There are, however, parallel passages in Romans and Galatians which support a Pauline theory of natural law.⁷² In I Corinthians 11:14, Paul seems to be appealing to the observable fact that men and women wear their hair differently in order to support his argument for retaining sexual distinctions. This was a common Graeco-Roman argument.⁷³ Customary practices were assumed to be the only natural way.

Many commentators believe that homosexuality⁷⁴ or gnostic androgyny⁷⁵ was a central problem for the early Corinthian church. This is the reason why head coverings and hair are not "incidental matters,"⁷⁶ but of deep concern to Paul. He knew that customs and habits affected the understanding of the gospel, so he often addressed himself to the specifics of a situation and did not ignore what Walker labels "peripheral matters."⁷⁷

Walker's last argument against the authenticity of I Corinthians 11:2-16 is based on its similarity with the tone and vocabulary of

⁷¹Walker, p. 107. ⁷²Romans 2:27, 2:14, Gal. 4:8.

⁷³Epictetus, Discourses 1.16.10; Herodotus, History 1:82.7; Conzelmann, p. 190f; Barrett, p. 356.

⁷⁴Barrett, p. 257; Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman: Revisited," p. 534.

⁷⁵Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyn," p. 202f.

⁷⁶Walker, p. 106.

⁷⁷Walker, p. 108; See I Cor. 9:1-13, 10:31-33 for Paul's explanation of why customs are important. Paul has many examples in I Corinthians of his concern for details. I Cor. 8:13, 11:20, 16:1-4.

Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:22-23.⁷⁸ Since both of these letters are regarded by many scholars as pseudo-Pauline,⁷⁹ he infers that "some of the same interests which led to the writing of the pseudo-Pauline literature may have been responsible for at least some of the interpolations of the non-Pauline materials into Paul's authentic writings."⁸⁰

This argument, based solely on similarities, is very weak, and there are many other ways to explain the resemblances. Hans Conzelmann suggests that I Corinthians 11:2-16 may reflect Paul's early education in Hellenistic Jewish esoteric wisdom.⁸¹ These same "school discussions."⁸² would be available to the authors of the later epistles as well as to Paul. Or, Colossians and Ephesians could be directly dependent on I Corinthians, rather than vice versa.⁸³

Both of these suggestions indicate that Walker's argument in regard to the textual affinity between I Corinthians 11:2-16 and Ephesians and Colossians is far from conclusive. I must agree with Murphy-O'Connor's criticism of this type of argument. It is "a classical example of 'evidence which fits' as opposed to 'evidence which proves.'"⁸⁴

⁷⁸Walker, p. 104.

⁷⁹Walker, p. 104; Norman Perrin, The New Testament, An Introduction (New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), p. 59; Bruce Metzger, The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 231-237.

⁸⁰Walker, p. 104. ⁸¹Conzelmann, p. 182f. ⁸²Conzelmann, p. 182.

⁸³See Murphy-O'Connor's argument for the authenticity of these verses, p. 619.

⁸⁴Murphy-O'Connor, p. 619.

Murphy-O'Connor's criticism could be equally applied to the whole set of textual arguments against both I Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 11:2-16. They are compatible with the hypothesis, but certainly don't exclude other possible explanations. The textual approach to clarifying Paul's ethical stance on women in the church attempts to solve the problem by denying that the problem exists.

The Historical Solution

A more fruitful approach centers not on the text, but on Paul himself. Scholars have focused their attention on Paul in order to understand why "he affirms the liberation of slaves and women, (and yet) he declines to challenge the social structures that perpetuate their subordination."⁸⁵ They blame the culture in which he grew up for his "ambivalence," toward sexual equality.⁸⁶

According to Elaine Pagels, Paul's admonition to the Corinthian women to keep silent in church seems almost totally predictable in light of his background. He was, after all, a Hellenistic Jew. He was born into a society and nurtured in a religion which supported patriarchial rule. It is easy to see how Paul's past could limit his ability to carry out the bold proclamation of sexual equality that he made to the Galatian congregation.⁸⁷

First century Hellenism was deeply influenced by Greek and Roman philosophical schools and the proto-gnostic religions of the East.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Pagels, p. 545. ⁸⁶ Pagels, p. 544. ⁸⁷ Gal. 3:27-28, Pagels, pp. 539f.

⁸⁸ Cumming, p. 525; Conzelmann, p. 15.

Most of the contemporary philosophical schools followed Plato's schema for the utopia and advocated the equality of women and men.⁸⁹ But this insight was for all intents and purposes limited to utopia. The schools with rare exceptions remained closed fraternities which preferred to talk about sexual equality rather than practice it.⁹⁰

Philosophers such as Epictetus and Seneca regarded women as worthless, sentimental and silly.⁹¹ Only the Epicurians truly upheld sexual equality. But they tended to sacrifice eros and love for the sake of communal fellowship.⁹²

The Gnostic religions⁹³ that swept over the Hellenistic world shared the Epicurians' distaste for eros and love.⁹⁴ An enlightened person repudiated the physical world, including his or her own body, in favor of the life of the spirit.⁹⁵ Accordingly, sexual equality could be achieved only by totally denying the physical differences between men and women. The Gospel of Thomas describes the process of male and female becoming one by the woman becoming spiritually a

⁸⁹Plato, Republic, Book V; Cumming, p. 522f; Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 170f.

⁹⁰Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 171.

⁹¹Epictetus, Discourses, 3.24.5, 3.24.53; Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 172, n. 37.

⁹²Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 173f.

⁹³Conzelmann refers to this influence as "proto-gnosticism" p. 14ff.

⁹⁴Saturnius, a later Gnostic theologian, forbade his disciples to marry, believing that marriage and regeneration were created by the devil. Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 17.

⁹⁵Grant, p. 7.

man.⁹⁶ The cost of sexual equality was not only celibacy, but a total abnegation of the woman's sexual identity.⁹⁷

Judaism was no more sympathetic to sexual equality than the culture that surrounded it. Out of economic necessity some women were allowed to engage in trade and commerce,⁹⁸ but their social and religious roles were dictated by regulations designed to keep them in a subordinate position. Joachim Jeremias describes the strict exclusionary laws that kept women in their houses and subject to their fathers and brothers.⁹⁹ Women were even forbidden to read the Torah. A popular contemporary saying describes the religious attitude toward women: "Every man who teaches his daughter the Torah is as if he taught her promiscuity."¹⁰⁰ When a woman inquired of the great Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus about a difficult point of law, he responded, "Let the words of the Torah be burned up, but let them not be delivered to a woman."¹⁰¹

In light of Paul's culture and religious traditions, it is easy to conclude that,

⁹⁶ Gospel of Thomas, Logion 114, cited by Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 194f.

⁹⁷ Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 194.

⁹⁸ Acts 16:14, 18:3; Meeks "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 175.

⁹⁹ Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 359-76.

¹⁰⁰ Eliezar ben Hyrcanus in the Mishnah, Sotah 3, cited by Jeremias, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Palestinian Talmud, Sotah 3:4 cited by Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 175.

although he was always grateful for the hospitality extended to him by women and although he made much of the family from the religion, he did not expect women to take an active part in the instruction of others.¹⁰²

Many commentators, therefore, explain away Galatians 3:27-28 as a proclamation of spiritual freedom which has little to do with the social order.¹⁰³ According to Adela Collins, Ernest Burton and Alan Cumming,¹⁰⁴ Paul's attitude toward the emancipation of women is dualistic. Like the Gnostics, Paul has divided reality into two spheres. In the spiritual realm women are equal to men. Their different roles and rights are cancelled "in the Lord."¹⁰⁵ They have equal access to salvation. But in the physical world, which includes the church, women are 'naturally' subordinate to men.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Paul integrates both his Hellenistic and Jewish background and his concept of Christian freedom¹⁰⁷ by adopting a Gnostic interpretation of reality.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Cumming, p. 526.

¹⁰³ Adela Yarbro Collins, "An Inclusive Biblical Anthropology," Theology Today, XXXIV, 4 (January 1978), 368.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, p. 368; Burton, p. 206f; Cumming, p. 526.

¹⁰⁵ Conzelmann, p. 190.

¹⁰⁶ Conzelmann, pp. 188-190.

¹⁰⁷ Collins, p. 368; Betz, "Paul's Concept of Freedom," pp. 1-13; G.B. Caird, "Paul and Women's Liberty," The John Ryland's Library 54 (1972), pp. 268-81.

¹⁰⁸ R. Reitzenstein, Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), pp. 73-79, 33-396, as cited by Conzelmann, p. 14f.

Critique of the Historical Solution

It is true that liberty for Paul was essentially spiritual, but he did not have a Gnostic concept of reality.¹⁰⁹ The life of the spirit permeated the entire existence of the Christian. Paul clearly states, "If the spirit is the source of our life, let the spirit also direct our course."¹¹⁰ The interrelationship of the Christian's spiritual calling with his or her actions is a continual theme throughout the Pauline epistles. As G.B. Caird points out,

Not the least of the reasons why Paul insists on the absolute incompatibility of law and gospel is that those who identify the will of God with law are not free to order their conduct by the creative constraints of the animating spirit.¹¹¹

Paul refused to accept the cultural proscriptions against Gentiles, slaves and women. He bitterly opposed Peter, James and even Barnabas' attempts to retain the Jewish laws of purification.¹¹² He called them hypocrites for taking pride in being "Jews by nature," rather than exalting in their unity with all people through the crucified Christ.¹¹³

Just as Greeks should not submit themselves to circumcision in order to join the Christian fellowship, slaves and women did not have to change their status or sex¹¹⁴ in order fully to share in the life of the Christian community.¹¹⁵ It is true that Paul did not advocate

¹⁰⁹Betz, pp. 1-13. ¹¹⁰Galatians 5:25.

¹¹¹G.B. Caird, "Paul and Women's Liberty," John Ryland's Library Bulletin, LIV (1972), 272.

¹¹²Gal. 2:11-21. ¹¹³Gal. 2:12-20.

¹¹⁴cf. Gospel of Thomas, Logion 114 cited by Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 194f.

¹¹⁵I Cor. 7:12-24.

disrupting the general social order which harshly discriminated against slaves and women,¹¹⁶ but he did demand that within the Christian community slaves be treated as "beloved brother(s)"¹¹⁷ and as "the Lord's freedmen."¹¹⁸

Women also experienced an increase of freedom and authority within the Pauline communities. Unlike his contemporary Jews, Paul preached to women and encouraged them to take leadership roles in the Church.¹¹⁹ It is especially noteworthy that he commands Phoebe to the Roman church and extols her as a "deacon" of the church at Cenchreae, who has helped him and many others.¹²⁰ When two prominent Christian women have a disagreement which threatens the church at Philippi, Paul does not silence them. Rather, he urges them to "be of the same mind as the Lord."¹²¹ Then he praises them as fellow workers, who have labored side by side with him.¹²² Throughout his epistles, Paul constantly mentions the women who have been leaders in the local churches.¹²³ The tradition of women's full participation in the Pauline churches is so well known that mention of specific women who worked with Paul is included in both the Acts of the Apostles and the Pastoral letters.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶I Cor. 7:20-21, Rom. 13; Pagels, p. 546; Scott S. Bartchy, First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of I Corinthians 7:21 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973); Collins, p. 368.

¹¹⁷Philemon 16. ¹¹⁸I Cor. 2:22.

¹¹⁹W. Derek Thomas "The Place of Women in the Church at Philippi," Expository Times LXXXIII (1972), 117-120.

¹²⁰Rom. 16:2. ¹²¹Phil. 4:2. ¹²²Phil. 4:3.

¹²³Rom. 16, I Cor. 16:19, Philemon, Phil. 4:2.

¹²⁴Acts 16:14-15; 18:2; 2 Tim. 14:19. Because of Paul's reputation for supporting the ministry of women, Marcion believed that he

The Eschatological Solution

If Paul had overcome the biases of his Hellenistic Jewish background, then the question arises, why he could not forthrightly advocate the liberation of slaves and women? Why did he insist that each person remain in the station in which he or she was called?¹²⁵ Some critics who look to Paul as the source of the confusion over his stance on women's roles in the church contend that it is not so much his past, but his vision of the future which shaped his attitude.

Ever since the pioneering work of Albert Schweitzer,¹²⁶ eschatology has become the whipping boy of New Testament scholarship. Jack Sanders cavalierly dismisses Paul's entire ethics as "arbitrary, absolute and altogether to be explained from his belief in imminent eschatological divine judgment."¹²⁷ Accordingly, Paul advised the Corinthians to "remain in the station in which one is called,"¹²⁸ only because he believed that the end of time was near.

In a similar vein Hans Conzelmann interprets both I Corinthians 7 and 11 as establishing a division between the expression of freedom

was being faithful to Paul when he permitted women to administer baptism and conduct official church functions. Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 198.

¹²⁵I Cor. 7:20.

¹²⁶Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (New York: Holt, 1931); Albert Schweitzer, The Quest for the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

¹²⁷Sanders, p. 48.

¹²⁸I Cor. 7:20, (my translation).

in time and in the eschaton.¹²⁹ The new Christians are simply arrogant to assume that they can break down the distinctions between slaves and masters, or between men and women. Only in the eschaton will equality be established, not "in us," but "in the Lord."¹³⁰ Therefore, slaves and women do not need to change their social institutions in order to secure their freedom. The fullness of their liberty in Christ will come when the present world order passes away.¹³¹

The idea of freedom only being attainable after death is justly criticized by Elaine Pagels and Jack Sanders.¹³² Pagels contends that if Paul had "seen such concessions as a temporary expedient in view of the coming eschaton, (then) to us, some 1,900 years later they may look quite different!"¹³³ It now appears ridiculous to ask slaves and women to remain in a state of servitude while they wait a few thousand years for the world to end. But is that really what Paul is saying? Does liberation in Christ only begin when all temporal existence ends? What about Paul's concept of the "new creation?"¹³⁴

Critique of the Eschatological Solution

According to Scroggs and Furnish, the dichotomy of freedom is not between the present and the future, but rather between the old world and the new.¹³⁵ They believe that Paul does not accept the common contemporary

¹²⁹Conzelmann, p. 126. ¹³⁰Conzelmann, p. 190f.

¹³¹I Cor. 7:31; Pagels, p. 547.

¹³²Pagels, p. 546f; Sanders pp. 47-66.

¹³³Pagels, p. 546. ¹³⁴II Cor. 3:17.

¹³⁵Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 286ff; Furnish, p. 214f.

view of a radical split between the two ages. "(He) claims that this future world has already broken into the present and manifests itself amidst the ruin of the old world."¹³⁶ The Christian church is, therefore, by definition an eschatological community. Scroggs even contends that according to Paul, "the community under Christ and in the Spirit cannot be compared with the old world, does not live out of its values, (I Cor. 2:29-31) is not bound to its mores, its laws, its societal roles."¹³⁷

Thus, entrance into the eschatological community is not achieved through death or participation in the parousia, but rather through the waters of baptism. During the baptismal ceremony the initiates declared that they were totally changed. Galatians 3:27-28 was probably a common first-century baptismal pronouncement.¹³⁸ Hans Dieter Betz describes how the new Christians saw their unity in Christ affecting their life now and eternally.

In the liturgy, the saying would communicate information to the newly initiated, telling them of their eschatological status before God in anticipation of the last judgment, and also informing them how this status affects, and in fact changes their social, cultural and religious self understanding and their responsibilities in the here and now.¹³⁹

The baptismal pledge of fellowship with all believers had both psychological and social ramifications. The Christians declared that

¹³⁶Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 287.

¹³⁷Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 286. See Chapter III for my criticism of this position.

¹³⁸Meeks, "The Image of The Androgyne," p. 180.

¹³⁹Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) paging according to the printer's gallies, p. 344f.

they no longer held status, race or sex as definitive evaluations of human worth. When, however, the Corinthians were enjoined by Paul to remain in the stations in which they were called, this was not an affirmation of the status quo, but an insistence that they did not need to change their status in the world in order to be totally transformed in Christ. Robin Scroggs interprets the so-called "eschatological reservation" of I Corinthians 7 as, "not primarily tied to the temporal imminency of the eschaton but to the qualitative existence people are called to live now because they belong to the new creation."¹⁴⁰ Thus, the believers continue in the state of marriage or in the social status they had before they were converted, but that state or status is no longer their essential identity. Their identity is their relationship to Christ. Paul explicitly states, "For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise, he who is free when called is a slave of Christ."¹⁴¹

The transformation of the Christian's attitude toward social status was not a Stoic indifference to the world, for this new way of looking at others deeply affected the social structure of the Christian communities.¹⁴² Slaves were regarded and treated as beloved disciples.¹⁴³ Greeks became leaders in the church.¹⁴⁴ Women were even appointed to be deacons and teachers.¹⁴⁵ Slaves, Greeks and women may have had to continue in the confining social roles assigned to them by law and

¹⁴⁰Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 296.

¹⁴¹I Cor. 7:22. ¹⁴²Collins, p. 368. ¹⁴³Philemon 10.

¹⁴⁴Gal. 2:3, 2 Cor. 2:13, 7:16, 13.

¹⁴⁵Romans 16:1, 3; Acts 18:25; Phil. 4:2-3.

custom, but within the Christian communities they were free to exercise their unique God given abilities.

The Theological Solution

Why then did Paul ask the Corinthian women to be silent in church and to veil themselves when they prayed and prophesied?¹⁴⁶ The textual critics are unable to resolve this apparent contradiction by completely dismissing these exhortations from the Pauline corpus. In view of Paul's insistence that Greeks, slaves, and women are full participants in the Christian community, the historians cannot simply point to his Hellenistic Jewish past as the source of his stance on women's authority in the church. Even Paul's belief in the imminent destruction of the world does not explain how he could accept women as leaders in some churches, but ask the Corinthian women to be silent or only speak while they were veiled.

Elaine Pagels, Victor Furnish and Jack Sanders excuse Paul's "anti-feminist" comments by asserting that Paul does not really have a consistent stance on sexual equality precisely because he does not really have an ethical system.¹⁴⁷ For them, Paul is a theologian, not an ethicist. His exhortations spring from the confrontation of his theology with each individual problem. Modern readers, therefore, should ignore his dated ethical advice and concentrate on the theological principles behind his parenetic sections.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶I Cor. 14:33b-36; 11:2-16.

¹⁴⁷Pagels, p. 544-549; Furnish, p. 208-213; Sanders, pp. 47-66.

¹⁴⁸Furnish, p. 211.

Elaine Pagels sees the root of the inconsistencies in Paul's theology. He desires both freedom and order. Thus, he is a man torn by internal conflict.¹⁴⁹ His ethical exhortations about women are contradictory because he desires liberty yet "fears and distrusts the diversity potentially involved in genuine liberty."¹⁵⁰ Paul's advice should, therefore, be taken selectively. According to Pagels, the apostle doesn't have an ethical stance on women's emancipation, he has only a grab bag containing some useful insights among others that are tinged with arrogance or timidity.¹⁵¹

Victor Furnish does not probe into the motivations behind Paul's 'unsystematic' approach. He merely accepts the fact that Paul's "letters offer no self-conscious, systematic analysis of the ground motives, forms or goals of Christian conduct."¹⁵² He even denies that there is any consistent pattern in his moral directives. According to Furnish, every norm offered by Paul is strictly ad hoc, limited to the situation. In his judgment, the apostle does not and cannot have an ethical system. For Paul is a theologian and his theology "shapes his responses to practical questions of conduct."¹⁵³

Neither Victor Furnish nor Jack Sanders can find any similarities between modern and classical ethical systems and Paul's exhortations and instructions to the local churches.¹⁵⁴ They are right. Paul does not

¹⁴⁹ Pagels, p. 544. ¹⁵⁰ Pagels, p. 546. ¹⁵¹ Pagels, p. 548.

¹⁵² Furnish, p. 210.

¹⁵³ Furnish, p. 212; Betz suggests that Paul retracted Gal. 3:28c in I Cor. due to the difficulties which may have arisen from the emancipation of women. Betz, Galatians, p. 355f.

¹⁵⁴ Furnish, p. 209ff; Sanders, p. 48.

demonstrate a "special consideration of the nature, forms, principles and goals of 'right or good conduct.'"¹⁵⁵ But the classical system of moral virtues and the modern systems of moral obligation do not exhaust the possible models of ethics.

CONCLUSION

In the following chapter we will examine Paul's ethics in light of a contemporary Graeco-Roman therapeutic model of ethics. This approach to morality is as flexible as either modern or classical ethical systems. By comparing Paul's ethical statements with those of his late contemporary, the philosopher, Plutarch of Chaironeia, we will be able to see how a therapeutic system of ethics offers one prescription for a specific moral "illness" and its antidote for another. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that Paul's so-called "inconsistent moral injunctions" are firmly based on the principle of Christian freedom and directed toward sustaining and building the Body of Christ. Far from being unsystematic, Paul's ethics emerge in our study as a highly structured example of Graeco-Roman therapeutic ethics.

In chapter III we will look closely at how Paul's therapeutic ethics balances women's freedom in Christ with the cultural and spiritual limitations of the local churches. We will see how Paul redefines therapeutic ethics as a communal ethics. Consequently, freedom is also re-defined as an exclusive attribute of the Christian church which is intended to serve the community and not the individual. Thus, Paul can

¹⁵⁵Furnish, p. 209; John L. McKenzie, "Natural Law in the New Testament," Biblical Research, XI (1964), 11-13.

unconditionally affirm sexual equality¹⁵⁶ and appoint women to be leaders in several local churches,¹⁵⁷ yet also demand that the Corinthian women be sensitive to others and refrain from expressing their God given freedom irresponsibly during the worship services.

In the final chapter, I will attempt to relate Paul's concept of therapeutic community-based ethics to the struggle women are presently experiencing in Christian churches. Hopefully, Paul's sensitive approach toward the complex problem of women's liberation will offer women a model for asserting their freedom without destroying the church in the process.

¹⁵⁶Gal. 3:28. ¹⁵⁷Romans 16:1; Phil. 2:4.

CHAPTER II

AN ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S THERAPEUTIC ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

Just as Romans is the locus classicus of Paul's theology, I Corinthians is the primary source for analyzing his ethics.¹ From the first chapter to the last, Paul concentrates on the numerous moral problems of this young spirit-filled church. At first glance this letter seems to confirm the judgment of Elaine Pagels, Victor Furnish and Jack Sanders that Paul really does not have an ethical system.² Within these sixteen chapters Paul jumps from one topic to another, often without any apparent thematic continuity.

The letter begins with a plea for unity in the church and then skips from a discussion on judgment to sexuality and finally to the individual's responsibilities to the community of believers. What is worse, Paul seems to give contradictory advice about each situation.

In chapter 4, Paul admonishes the Corinthians not to judge prematurely his ministry.³ He bases his defense against judgment

¹See Mary Andrews, The Ethical Teaching of Paul (Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 39; Hans von Soden, "Sacrament and Ethics in Paul," in Wayne E. Meeks (ed.) The Writings of St. Paul (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 267; Hans Conzelmann, I Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 9f.

²Elaine H. Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XLII (September, 1974), 544-549; Victor Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingden Press, 1968), pp. 207-279; Jack T. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 47-66.

³I Cor. 4:3-5.

on the right of Christ to judge each person when he returns.⁴ Yet, in the very next chapter, Paul seems to ignore his own directive when faced with a case of flagrant sexual immorality. The man who is sleeping with his father's wife⁵ is not only to be judged, but "consigned to Satan for the destruction of his flesh."⁶ Likewise, the Corinthians are commanded to drive out the robbers, slanderers, the greedy, drunkards, idolaters and immoral people from their midst.⁷ Far from refraining from judgment as he himself advised in chapter 4, Paul now commands the Corinthians to cleanse their community of sinners.

Chapter 7 is at first glance even more contradictory than chapters 4 and 5. Paul opens the discussion of sexuality by agreeing with the Corinthians that "it is good for a man not to touch a woman."⁸ Then he quickly concedes that each man may have a wife and each woman a husband. Furthermore, he cautions couples against asceticism.⁹ The

⁴I Cor. 4:5; see also Krister Stendahl, "Hate, Non-Retaliation, and Love," Harvard Theological Review, LV (1962), 343-355.

⁵See Conzelmann, p. 96, for the possible interpretations of the woman's relationship to the young man.

⁶I Cor. 5:5. See Conzelmann for a discussion of the interpretations of this passage which range from excommunication to a sentence of death. p. 97f, esp. n. 36.

⁷I Cor. 5:11-12.

⁸I Cor. 7:1. See J. Stanley Glen, Pastoral Problems in First Corinthians (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 95f; John Coolidge Hurd, Jr., The Origin of I Corinthians (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), p. 163; C.K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 155; and Robin Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XL (September 1972), 295f.

⁹I Cor. 7:2-5.

entire chapter seems to vacillate between the two poles of celibacy,¹⁰ and the responsibilities of marriage.¹¹ The confusion is intensified by vs. 29; in light of the coming parousia, Paul counsels married brothers to live as though they did not have wives. This verse seems flatly to contradict Paul's admonition against asceticism in marriage.¹²

It is easy to understand why some critics have regarded Paul as the champion of celibacy,¹³ while others have lauded him for advocacy of mutual responsibility in marriage.¹⁴ But few have credited him with a consistent stand on sex and marriage.¹⁵ In chapter 7, Paul truly seems to fit Pagels' depiction of a "man in conflict."¹⁶ He appears to be combating asceticism and at the same time defending celibacy as a better way of serving the Lord's interests.

The largest part of I Corinthians is dedicated to the problem of harmony within the Body of Christ. The fledgling church is struggling with scandal, ascetic aspirations and factionalism. Not only are there different 'parties,'¹⁷ but some Christians are flaunting their 'freedom in Christ' to the detriment of the weaker brethren.¹⁸

¹⁰I Cor. 7:7, 9, 27, 28. ¹¹I Cor. 7:9, 10-16, 27a, 28. ¹²I Cor. 7:5.

¹³Conzelmann, p. 115f, esp. n. 14; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 155f.

¹⁴Barrett, p. 176f; Scroggs, p. 295ff.

¹⁵See Pagels, pp. 540-43, for a complex interpretation of Paul's stand on marriage and sex.

¹⁶Pagels, p. 544.

¹⁷I Cor. 1:10-17; Conzelmann, p. 33f.

¹⁸See esp. I Cor. 8:7-13.

The question of women participating in the worship services also troubles the Corinthian congregation.¹⁹ Paul seems reluctant to take a stand on this issue. He appears to be both for and against women speaking in church. In 11:5 he tacitly assumes that women have the right to "pray" and "prophesy." But for the sake of order, he demands that women follow the requirements of the Law and remain silent in church.²⁰ It is no wonder that many critics accuse Paul of being a theologian who has only a peripheral, or ad hoc interest in ethics.²¹

A careful examination of I Corinthians refutes the charge that Paul is uninterested in ethics. Paul devotes almost the entire letter to the behavior of the Corinthians.²² He argues that their actions are as important as what they believe. Thus, he chides them that on his return visit he will want to know not what these self important people have to say, but what they can do, since the kingdom of God is not just words, it is power.²³

CRITICISMS OF PAUL'S APPROACH TO ETHICS

It is not Paul's disinterest in ethical problems that primarily disturbs Pagels, Sanders and Furnish, but rather his "arbitrary"²⁴ and "unreflective"²⁵ approach toward ethics. Furnish dismisses Paul as an ethicist because:

¹⁹I Cor. 11:2-16, 14:35b-36; See also Grant Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church," Journal of Evangelical Theology, XX (1977), 349.

²⁰I Cor. 14:33b-36. ²¹Furnish, p. 211. ²²The sole exception is Chap. 15.

²³I Cor. 4:19-20. ²⁴Sanders, p. 66. ²⁵Furnish, p. 211.

The apostle himself seems not to have conceived of any special "ethical" side to his message or mission and certainly never attempts appraisal or even presentation of ethical principles, norms or theories. As virtually every interpreter of Paul has emphasized, his letters offer no self-conscious, systematic analysis of the ground, motives, forms or goals of Christian conduct. It is inappropriate to speak of a "Pauline ethic" in this sense....²⁶

Furnish advises us to give up the search for "a pattern of ethics," or even "ethical theories or the systematic presentation of ethical norms and principles."²⁷ We must content ourselves with the fact that Paul is unconcerned with ethical theory. He is simply a theologian whose "convictions shape his responses to practical questions of conduct."²⁸ Accordingly, if we want to understand why Paul advised the women in Corinth to be silent while proclaiming the equality of the sexes to the churches in Galatia, we must study his "multiple theological motifs,"²⁹ not some hypothetical ethics. Furnish concludes that Paul is a theologian, not an ethicist.

Pagels and Sanders do not totally discount Paul as an ethicist, but advise us to interpret him "selectively."³⁰ They believe that only certain passages and principles that conform to our modern understanding of transcendence and ~~hypothetical~~² can be salvaged from his confused and culturally restricted ethics.³¹ According to these critics, Mary Andrews' totally pragmatic assessment of Paul's ethics may be quite accurate. Perhaps the apostle did develop his ethics only as an afterthought, as a rationale for his quixotic actions. It might, thus, be more appropriate

²⁶Furnish, p. 210. ²⁷Furnish, p. 210. ²⁸Furnish, p. 212.

²⁹Furnish, p. 212f. ³⁰Pagels, p. 548; Sanders, p. 65f.

³¹Sanders, p. 66; Pagels, p. 548.

to study Paul's psychological make-up rather than his feeble attempts to justify his emotional exhortations.³²

A THERAPEUTIC MODEL OF ETHICS

But this judgment against Pauline ethics is far too hasty. It is true that his approach to ethics seems inconsistent and unreflective if we compare it with Dewey's assessment of ethics,³³ or with the theories of contemporary analytical ethicists.³⁴ Paul's ethics is not "a systematic account of our judgments about conduct"³⁵ as Dewey and Tufts define ethics. Nor is Paul concerned with "logical, epistemological or semantical questions."³⁶ But as William Frankena points out, one does not have to ask "What is the nature of Morality?" in order to be an ethicist.³⁷

Paul, like his contemporaries, was primarily interested in normative ethics. The Greek and Roman philosophers of the first century generally accepted the basic assumptions of the classical writers.³⁸ The question, however, was no longer "Can we justify an ethics?"; but, rather, "How do we cure the moral illnesses of individuals and society?".

³²Andrews, p. 37.

³³John Dewey and James H. Tufts, Ethics (New York: Holt, 1932), p. 3.

³⁴See William Frankena, Ethics (Englewood Cliffs; Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 4f.

³⁵Dewey and Tufts, p. 3. ³⁶Frankena, p. 4; See Furnish, pp. 208-210.

³⁷Frankena, p. 4f.

³⁸Hans Dieter Betz, "Introduction" in his Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 6.

Aristotle's over-reaching concept of virtue was replaced by the notion of health or well-being.³⁹

Paul is similarly unconcerned with the ideal of virtue. He uses the word *ἀγαπη* only once in his writing.⁴⁰ Even in this case, the word is used to describe the content of Christians' thoughts rather than their behavior.⁴¹

The aim of the Graeco-Roman ethics of the first century was to educate the individual and society to recognize and treat spiritual illnesses.⁴² They believed that discordant behavior was caused by 'sick souls.' Consequently, the ethicists viewed themselves as therapists of the soul.⁴³ Ethicists, such as Plutarch,⁴⁴ were unconcerned with meta-ethical questions, or systematic accounts of human judgments about conduct.⁴⁵ They were practitioners who concentrated "on providing practical advice for those who want to be able to evaluate their own conduct and in giving useful guidance to the readers who want to improve their lives."⁴⁶

³⁹ See Betz, p. 1. ⁴⁰ Phil. 4:8.

⁴¹ See W. Schrage, "Ethics in the N.T.," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingden Press, 1976), Supp. vol., p. 285; and Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr, Christian Ethics (New York: Ronald Press, 1973), p. 15.

⁴² Betz, p. 7; William C. Greese, "De Profectibus in Virtue," in Betz, p. 12.

⁴³ Betz, p. 7; F.C. Babbitt, "Introduction" in Plutarch, Moralia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), I, xv.

⁴⁴ Plutarch's dates are approximately 46-120 AD. Babbitt, I, ix.

⁴⁵ Frankena, p. 4; Dewey and Tufts, p. 3. ⁴⁶ Greese, p. 12.

The Presuppositions of Therapeutic Ethics

An analysis of Paul's ethics in light of Plutarch's ethical writings will reveal their shared presuppositions. Plutarch is an ideal source for understanding the Graeco-Roman style of ethics both because of the insightful and detailed nature of his ethical writings and the recently renewed scholarly interest in his works.⁴⁷ In spite of their theological and philosophical differences, Paul shared Plutarch's presuppositions that: Practical applications are as important as speculative theories, behavior reflects the state of one's soul, and all people are morally ill.

The similarities between their respective ethics are so striking that previous scholars have held that Plutarch was influenced by Pauline Christianity. But there is no evidence that he was familiar with the Christian faith. The similarity stems more from a common zeitgeist than any form of ideological indebtedness.⁴⁸ Both Paul and Plutarch reflect their society's desire for ethical systems that are therapeutic rather than highly theoretical.

Since Socrates, ethicists have desired to bridge "the gulf between philosophical ethical theory and practice."⁴⁹ The therapeutic approach to moral problems forms that bridge between theory and practice. Both Plutarch and Paul have disdain for people who discuss philosophy and morality but refuse to conform their actions to their words.

⁴⁷ Betz; P. Merlen "Plutarch and Taurus," in The Cambridge History of Latin Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 58-64.

⁴⁸ Betz, p. 8; Babbitt, I, xvii; R.H. Barrow, Plutarch and His Times (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 99.

⁴⁹ Betz, p. 6.

Plutarch recommends that wise people arrive "at their convictions by putting them to a practical test."⁵⁰ He likewise mocks

those who are still studying, and busily looking to see what they can get from philosophy which they can straightway haul out for philosophy in the Forum... (they) ought not to be thought to practice medicine,⁵¹ any more than apothecaries are to be thought to practice medicine.

The Corinthians exemplify this split between theory and practice. They take pride in their knowledge of good and evil,⁵² yet they neglect to apply this "knowledge"⁵³ to help the church. They permit incest among their members; they drag each other before the courts, and condone fornication.⁵⁴ They even insult and scandalize the poorer and the less mature Christians.⁵⁵ Paul insists that they must first love God and one another or their faith and knowledge are useless.⁵⁶ Paul abhors the false dichotomy between theory and practice, which they exemplify. He insists that the Corinthians do more than pray and prophesy. They must love one another. If they cannot accept the message of the cross, the model of all Christian love, then they cannot claim to have the wisdom of God.⁵⁷

Therapeutic ethics not only rejects the division between theory and practice, but also the modern behavioristic interpretation of morality.⁵⁸ Both Plutarch and Paul believe that all behavior reflects the condition of the soul. The ethicist cannot treat only the symptomatic

⁵⁰Plutarch, I, 79F, p. 425. ⁵¹Plutarch, I, 80A, p. 425.

⁵²I Cor. 1:4-7, 5:6, 6:9, 8:1. ⁵³I Cor. 4:18-21.

⁵⁴I Cor. 5:1-13, 6:1-8, 6:12-20. ⁵⁵I Cor. 8-11. ⁵⁶I Cor. 13.

⁵⁷I Cor. 1:17-25.

⁵⁸B.F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Knopf, 1971).

habits of the person, but must attend to the individual's spirit.

Contrary to the Skinnerian analysis of human conduct, these first century ethicists, like the classicists before them, held that the soul was superior to the body and its emotions, and thus controlled all human actions.⁵⁹

Plutarch contends that even common bad habits such as talkativeness emanate from a disease of the soul. The "chatterbox" needs to change his will if he desires to be cured.⁶⁰ Plutarch advises the talkative person to assert his willpower over his tongue "by biting it till it bleeds."⁶¹ For just as the shoe turns the foot, he assumes that the soul controls the body. Only reason can restrain a wandering tongue.⁶²

Paul likewise blames the Corinthians' sinful behavior on their lack of spirituality.⁶³ If they were really as spiritually mature as they consider themselves to be, they would not carelessly offend their fellow Christians. Paul contends that their shallow understanding of the gospel⁶⁴ has not only affected the vitality of the Corinthian church, but also the health of many of their members. Even their physical sickness may be a symptom of a diseased spirit.⁶⁵

⁵⁹Plutarch, "On Tranquility of Mind," in his Moralia, VI, 475D, p. 227; 476A, p. 231; Betz "De Tranquillitate Animi," in his Plutarch's Ethical Writings..., p. 225.

⁶⁰Plutarch, "On Tranquility of Mind," 502E, p. 399.

⁶¹Plutarch, "On Tranquility of Mind," 502E, p. 399.

⁶²Plutarch, "On Tranquility of Mind," 466F, p. 179.

⁶³I Cor. 2:16, 3:3, 3:17. ⁶⁴I Cor. 8:1-3.

⁶⁵I Cor. 11:28-32; c.f. Conzelmann's interpretation of the Corinthians' illnesses as a form of divine punishment, p. 203.

Plutarch's ethics are essentially negative. He continually refers to the human soul as sick and in need of therapy. Unlike the Stoics, Plutarch believes that everyone is both good and evil.⁶⁶ Evil is always threatening to overcome the patient. Thus, Plutarch warns the reader to be vigilant against vice and to beware "of diverse pleasures, recreations, and pastimes, which are, as it were, envoys sent by vice to treat for a truce."⁶⁷

In his classic text on Christian ethics, H. Richard Niebuhr describes the basis of Pauline ethics as "the understanding that man (sic) is morally ill and needs to be made well before he can act as a normal human being should and would act."⁶⁸ Although Paul is less explicit than Plutarch,⁶⁹ both approach ethics as physicians. This is evident in their prescription of different cures for varying illnesses. Neither ethicist seems to be concerned with eternal laws or a hierarchy of values. They both address ethical problems with an openness to their complexity and an awareness of the repercussions of their judgments.

The Strategies of Therapeutic Ethics

Since therapeutic ethics is more concerned with practical applications than theories, it likewise emphasizes strategies rather than

⁶⁶ Betz, p. 7; Plutarch, "Progress of Virtue" in his Moralia I, 75A-86A, pp. 401-456; Grese, p. 11f; Edward O'Neil, "De Cupido Divitiarium," in Betz, Plutarch's Ethical Writings..., pp. 317-318.

⁶⁷ Plutarch, "Progress of Virtue," 76E, p. 409.

⁶⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, "Introduction to Biblical Ethics," in Beach and Niebuhr, p. 39.

⁶⁹ Betz, p. 7, O'Neil, p. 328; Hans Dieter Betz and John M. Dillon, "De Cohibenda Ira," in Betz, Plutarch's Ethical Writings..., p. 182.

philosophical or theological principles. In examining both Plutarch and Paul's approach to ethical problems, four basic strategies emerge:

- (1) The strength of the prescription is adjusted in accordance with the particular problem.
- (2) Popular opinion is often challenged.
- (3) Many resources are employed.
- (4) Exceptions are always possible.

These strategies are variously employed by both Plutarch and Paul in their therapeutic approach to morality.

Plutarch is especially sensitive to the needs of each situation.

In "The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men" he upholds the principle that everyone should be able to fully participate in social gatherings, especially the symposia.⁷⁰ He even states that women share the same virtues as men, including the character of intelligence.⁷¹ Yet in spite of his strong support for equality at the symposia, and his admiration of women, Plutarch is careful to have the women at the symposia remain silent.

In "The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men," Eumetis is described as an intelligent woman who, out of modesty and embarrassment, remains silent. She prefers that Aesop speak for her.⁷²

Plutarch is aware that sexual equality is an affront to his society. As a therapeutic ethicist he does not deny the principle when

⁷⁰Plutarch, "The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men," in his Moralia, II, 152D, p. 383; David E. Aune, "Septem Sapientium Convivium," in Betz, Plutarch's Ethical Writings..., p. 95.

⁷¹Plutarch, "Bravery of Women," in his Moralia, III, 243D, p. 475.

⁷²Plutarch, "The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men," 154B, p. 393; see Aune, p. 98.

he chooses not to prescribe the full measure in every situation. In light of the contemporary position of women⁷³ Plutarch's violation of custom in having a woman who is not a prostitute present at a *symposium* is a significant assault on the male chauvinism of this time.⁷⁴ As a wise physician he prefers a mild, but formative tonic, to one that would be too strong for the body to accept. It is enough to have Eumetis present, even if she does not speak.

The complexity of Plutarch's ethics is even further illustrated in his essay "On the Tranquility of Mind." In guiding the individual along the pathway to serenity, the philosopher seems to advocate a direction that is opposed to the common understanding of tranquility. He advises his friend, Paccius, not to abandon his busy life in his search for quietude. He is to do all the work that he is able to undertake. Plutarch points to Homer's Laertes who lived a life of solitude in the country for twenty years, yet was never free from the torments of his grief. Most women, he believes, have lives of simple responsibilities at home, and yet often fill their days with a cacophony of conflicting emotions.⁷⁵ Therefore, he recommends that

Tranquility and discontent should be determined, not by the multitude or the fewness of one's occupations, but by their excellence or baseness; for the omission of good acts is no less vexatious and disturbing than the commission of evil acts....⁷⁶

Plutarch's unorthodox prescription for serenity is based not on

⁷³See Chapter I. ⁷⁴Aune, p. 98.

⁷⁵Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind" 465D-466A, pp. 171-175.

⁷⁶Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind," 466A, p. 175.

an examination of the definition of tranquility,⁷⁷ but on his experiences and on literature. The essay continually quotes Hesiod, Homer, Menander, and numerous other poets.⁷⁸ His aim is not to develop a theory of serenity, but to help others develop "a skill and sense as to how they should live."⁷⁹ As a good apothecary, Plutarch not only dispenses different prescriptions to different people, but he gathers his remedies from varied sources. He makes use of archaic customs, rituals, popular opinions, philosophic arguments, and wisdom stories.⁸⁰ He does not search for perfect precepts to fit every case, but a wide range of models to enlighten such desperate situations as the grief of Laertes, and the discontent and greed of Alexander.⁸¹

While Plutarch's discussions of women and tranquility were influenced by the mores of his contemporaries, his ethics could not properly be classified as a situation ethics. In the face of various problems, Plutarch does not advise us to "push...principles aside and do the right thing," as Joseph Fletcher recommends.⁸² In "The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men" he advocates the principle of equality, but is

⁷⁷ c.f. Seneca "On the Tranquility of Mind," in his Moral Essays (New York: Putnam, 1928) XIII.1, p. 265f; Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (New York: Putnam, 1930) IV. 24, p. 81.

⁷⁸ Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind," 465D, p. 171; 465E, p. 173; 466B, p. 175.

⁷⁹ Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind," 467B, p. 181.

⁸⁰ Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind," 472E-F, p. 213; 465D, p. 171; Plutarch, "On the Control of Anger," in his Moralia, VI, 464B, p. 157f; Plutarch, "Dinner of the Seven Wise Men" 147E-F, p. 356.

⁸¹ Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind" 465E-466D, pp. 173-177.

⁸² Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 13.

cautious regarding its application.⁸³ In discussing anger, he warns against hastily forming principles based on popular opinion. Tranquility appears at first glance to be the child of simplicity and solitude, but a careful look at particular cases both from literature and daily life reveals the tenuousness of this relationship. Plutarch totally reverses the commonly accepted notion that peace is attained through passiveness. The quality of human actions, rather than their quantity, determines the tranquility of the spirit. Once again, Plutarch has prescribed an unusual approach to an ethical problem, but he has not ignored his ethical principles. He has gone beyond conventional wisdom to the complexity of the problem and in order to prescribe an appropriate remedy.

The problem of anger, however, presents us with an apparent contradiction in Plutarch's writings. In discussing morality, the philosopher defends the role of passion in human affairs, arguing that passion should not be extinguished by reason.⁸⁴ Reason should function as a caretaker of the emotions

to lop off the wild growth and to clip away excessive luxuriance and then to cultivate and to dispose for use the serviceable remainder. For neither do those who fear passion eradicate the disturbing element, but both temper what they fear.⁸⁵

He further states that the soldier needs to feel anger; it contributes to his courage in battle.⁸⁶

In his essay, "On the Control of Anger," however, Plutarch takes the opposite position. He rejects the popular notion that anger is a sign

⁸³ Aune, p. 98.

⁸⁴ Plutarch, "On Moral Virtue," in his Moralia, VI, 451C, p. 79.

⁸⁵ Plutarch, "On Moral Virtue," 451C, p. 79.

⁸⁶ Plutarch, "On Moral Virtue," p. 80.

of greatness and force of character. For him, it is the mark of "utter littleness and weakness."⁸⁷ He compares it with a fire which can totally engulf someone, so as to shut out all sense and reason. Consequently, the only way to handle anger is to extinguish it.⁸⁸

Plutarch seems to be saying that anger, *θυμός* is dangerous and must not be allowed to exist in the civilized heart;⁸⁹ but the soldier may find moderate anger a useful friend to spur his courage in the face of irrational dangers.⁹⁰ Plutarch assumes the role of the physician of the soul, demanding that a disease be eradicated in the general population. In certain individuals, however, the infection of anger is more like an inoculation that strengthens the system, than a virus that destroys the soul.

Paul likewise often seems to contradict himself. The same strategies that Plutarch used are present in Paul's ethics although they are not as obvious. The apostle weaves the therapeutic strategies into each of his decisions. He is continually claiming exceptions to the rule, rejecting popular conceptions, adjusting his maxims to fit a particular circumstance and employing many resources to support his advice. The confusion over Paul's stance on judgment, celibacy, and women's role in the church are clarified once we delineate the strategies being employed in each situation.

The problem of judgment is a dilemma for Paul. Aware of the fallibility of human discernment, Paul staunchly upholds the principle

⁸⁷Plutarch, "On Control of Anger," 456F, p. 117f.

⁸⁸Plutarch, "On Control of Anger," 453F, p. 99.

⁸⁹Plutarch, "On Control of Anger," 454B, p. 99f.

⁹⁰Plutarch, "On Moral Virtue," 451E, p. 81.

that God alone can judge a human heart.⁹¹ But he contends that there is an exception to this rule: the members of the Corinthian community who are destroying the church must be judged and punished. They are not just ruining their own lives, but they have become like a yeast that is polluting the community of faith.⁹²

Paul describes human judgment as a sin of arrogance,⁹³ but exceptions must be made when the health of the community is at stake. Thus, Paul can lay down the rule that "there must be no passing of premature judgment,"⁹⁴ and then immediately point to the exception provided by the flagrant Christian sinners.⁹⁵ The exception does not destroy the rule,⁹⁶ but is part of a therapeutic model of ethics: no prescription can fit all cases. A "physician of the soul" would never rigidly cling to a principle at the cost of destroying the patient; just so, Paul must encourage judgment within the Christian community even if he condemns its practice outside the local church, and especially in regard to himself.⁹⁷

In the matter of sexual abstinence, Paul refuses to take either side. He does not hold the contemporary cultic reverence for celibacy.⁹⁸ Nor does he insist, as his Jewish forefathers had, that marriage is a

⁹¹I Cor. 4:1-13. ⁹²I Cor. 5:6-8. ⁹³I Cor. 4:4-5.

⁹⁴I Cor. 4:5 (Jerusalem Bible). ⁹⁵I Cor. 5:1-13.

⁹⁶See Analysis of moral exceptions, in Paul Ramsey, Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), pp. 72, 220-225; Paul Ramsey, Patient as Person (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 163.

⁹⁷I Cor. 5:12, 4:4-5.

⁹⁸I Cor. 7:2-5; See Hans Conzelmann on the Essenes, Vestal Virgins and other cultic endorsements of celibacy, p. 114f. nn. 5-8.

religious duty.⁹⁹

These obvious solutions to the problem of sex he firmly rejects. He does not advocate that all Christians abstain from sex or that they all must marry in order to lead lives pleasing to God. The deciding factor is the individual's gifts, not a general law. Hans Conzelmann accurately explains Paul's position.

Hence, there is no such thing as "the" Christian way of behavior, but only each man's particular way in his particular place. I cannot do my own particular duty by binding myself to a rule and thereby evading responsibility.¹⁰⁰

One prescription will not fit every person. Plutarch taught that tranquility is sought not in the avoidance of action, nor the submission to all duties, but in doing only those obligations that the individual deems to be worthwhile.¹⁰¹ Paul likewise advises Christians to choose their state in life according to their particular gifts.¹⁰²

Continence *εὐκπάτεια* is a gift and not a virtue for Paul.¹⁰³ The gift of celibacy enables a Christian to devote himself or herself entirely to the Lord's work. Like the athlete in I Cor. 9:25, the celibate Christian restrains his or her natural desires for the benefit of the community.¹⁰⁴ Asceticism is not the goal, but only the means by which Paul and others use their gifts to serve the Christian community.

⁹⁹ I Cor. 7:8-26; Conzelmann, p. 114, n. 5; Pagels, p. 542.

¹⁰⁰ Conzelmann, p. 118.

¹⁰¹ Plutarch, "On the Tranquility of Mind" 466A, 173f. ¹⁰² I Cor. 7:7.

¹⁰³ 7:8-9; Conzelmann, p. 120; Barrett, p. 177; C.F.W. Grundmann, "*εὐκπάτεια*," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 340f.

¹⁰⁴ Grundmann, p. 342.

But what of that troublesome passage about living as though you did not have a wife because the age is growing short?¹⁰⁵ Isn't Paul really saying that it is foolish for anyone to marry because the world is coming to an end? Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer interpret this passage as a clear denunciation of sex and marriage. According to Robertson and Plummer:

It is quite clear that if the conditions of the time are such that those who have wives ought to be as if they have none, then it is foolish to marry; for as soon as one had taken a wife one would have to behave as if one had not got one, i.e., one would undertake a great responsibility and then have the responsibility of trying to be free of it.¹⁰⁶

This interpretation clashes with Paul's denunciation of asceticism in vs. 7:5. Robertson and Plummer have understood the pronouncement of the eschaton in a misleadingly quantitative way. The proclamation of the end of the world also affects the qualitative dimensions of all human relationships. Paul says that human identity does not depend on marriage relationships, emotional states, possessions, or social and political status, because all these things pass away.¹⁰⁷ Paul does not advise the Corinthians to withdraw from the world;¹⁰⁸ on the contrary, as Robin Scroggs points out,

the believer continues to participate in marriage, in business, in community life, but he (sic) is freed from, unbound from the domineering claim and threat which that old allegiance had demanded and received.¹⁰⁹

The married couple does not try to free themselves from their conjugal responsibilities, but they are aware that their identity is not tied to their marriage. For even their marriage, which was blessed by God, will

¹⁰⁵I Cor. 7:29. ¹⁰⁶Robertson and Plummer, p. 155. ¹⁰⁷I Cor. 7:17-31.

¹⁰⁸Conzelmann, p. 133. ¹⁰⁹Robin Scroggs, p. 296.

pass away. Paul is not preaching one mode of behavior, ascetism, but radical allegiance to God over any form of involvement in the world.

Paul rejects the obvious solutions to the problem of marriage versus celibacy. The Corinthians are not urged to marry out of religious duty, nor to abstain from sex because the world is ending soon. Paul carefully examines each case, just as Plutarch did in his search for the road to tranquility. The guiding principle is similar to Plutarch's tenet that each person should fulfill his or her natural disposition and be as active as he or she desires. Paul advises the Christian to choose the state in life that fits him or her, for "each has his (or her) own particular gift from God, one in one direction, the other in another."¹¹⁰

The married, the unmarried, the widow, those married to unbelievers, the virgin and her guardian, all have different situations which are determined by their varying gifts.¹¹¹ Even when Paul is counseling married couples to honor their responsibilities to each other, he is careful to include a possible exception, but even the case of abstinence for the sake of prayer is dependent upon mutual consent.¹¹² Each person's gifts should determine their choice of celibacy or marriage. Paul refuses to endorse either the traditional concept of duty or the spiritualists' preference for celibacy. As a physician of the soul he especially recognizes the absurdity of forcing his own preference for celibacy upon other Christians.¹¹³

Paul's pliable ethics appear to harden when he is confronted with

¹¹⁰I Cor. 7:7.

¹¹¹I Cor. 7:2-6, 8-16, 25-28, 36-40; See Conzelmann, pp. 134-136 for a discussion of the relationship of the 'guardian' to the virgin.

¹¹²I Cor. 7:5. ¹¹³I Cor. 7:6-7.

the disruptive behavior of the Corinthian congregation. The apostle urges the Corinthians to use their gifts for the sake of the whole church. He bans glossalalia from the church, unless an interpreter is present.¹¹⁴ He cautions prophets to control their inspirations so as not to interrupt each other.¹¹⁵ He even asks the women to remain silent in church.¹¹⁶ Paul seems to be contradicting both his affirmation of spiritual gifts and his direction that women should pray and prophesy in church as long as they wear veils.¹¹⁷

A careful look at the text of I Cor. 14:26-40, however, reveals that Paul is addressing an exceptional situation in Corinth. The Corinthian worship services have become a scandal to the church. The community is broken into factions, and the members are obsessed with their own gifts and personal development.¹¹⁸ Paul attacks the disorder in the church at Corinth, not the free expression of the gifts of the Spirit. In each case he insists that spiritual gifts be used for the sake of the community and not for the individual. Those gifted with glossalalia must be silent in church if they do not have an interpreter. For they will only edify themselves if their message cannot be translated.¹¹⁹ Likewise, prophets are admonished to have their oracles tested by the congregation and to be silent if another person receives a revelation while they are speaking.¹²⁰ Paul does not believe in the ecstatic nature of the Spirit. Even

¹¹⁴I Cor. 14:28. ¹¹⁵I Cor. 14:29-33; See Conzelmann, p. 245f.

¹¹⁶I Cor. 14:33b-36. ¹¹⁷I Cor. 12, 11:5.

¹¹⁸I Cor. 1:11-12, 4:18, 11:18-22. ¹¹⁹I Cor. 14:23-28.

¹²⁰I Cor. 14:29-30; Conzelmann, p. 245f.

authentic prophets must restrain their gifts "so that all may learn and all be exhorted."¹²¹

The gifts of the Spirit, however, are not limited to men alone. In chapter 11 of I Corinthians, Paul clearly states that women should pray and prophesy in church.¹²² He then seems to contradict himself in chapter 14 when he insists that the Corinthian women be silent in church.¹²³ Fortunately, the apostle describes in vs. 35 the type of speaking which has come to his attention. The women are talking in order to learn something, "*μαθεῖν*".¹²⁴ It is only natural that they should have many questions. As women they have been generally excluded from religious services.¹²⁵ Thus, they are anxious to understand the significance of each part of the Christian worship service. But, their inquiries are disrupting the order of worship. Their questions are not edifying the congregation. Paul asks these women to save their questions for after the service, when they can ask their husbands, who have had more experience with worship services.

Just as Plutarch broadly railed against anger in his essay, "On the Control of Anger," Paul makes a sweeping statement demanding that women be silent in church.¹²⁶ But neither of these ethicists denies that particular situations can call forth exceptions to their ethical maxims.

¹²¹ I Cor. 14:31.

¹²² I Cor. 11:5; See also Romans 16 and Phil. 4:2 for examples of women with spiritual gifts.

¹²³ I Cor. 14:33b-36.

¹²⁴ Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 491.

¹²⁵ See chapter I. ¹²⁶ I Cor. 14:33b-36.

Plutarch contends that anger is appropriate for the man who has been called into battle even if it is detrimental to the general populace.¹²⁷ Similarly, Paul admits that women who are gifted with prayer and prophecy should use their gifts for the edification of the congregation, but the majority of women should save their questions for their private conversations at home.¹²⁸

Paul upholds the customary restrictions when he silences the Corinthian women. He even specifies that this is the law,¹²⁹ but this is the same man who preached the freedom of the Spirit to overcome the traditions of the law.¹³⁰ Paul often claimed that even though the law supported a general maxim, the situation may require exceptions to the rule. Paul's own ministry is a perfect example. In accordance with Jewish law and Greek tradition, Paul ought to be paid for his ministry.¹³¹ He even argues that, "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."¹³² But in spite of the law, Paul deliberately makes himself an exception to the rule for the sake "of the good news of Christ."¹³³ In the same manner, Paul recognizes that some women are called by the Spirit to speak during the worship services. Thus,

¹²⁷ Plutarch, "On Moral Virtue 451E, p. 81; Plutarch, "On the Control of Anger," 454B, p. 101.

¹²⁸ I Cor. 11:5, 14:33b-36.

¹²⁹ I Cor. 14:34. It is unknown whether Paul is referring to Jewish, Greek or cultural customs when he claims that it is the law for women to be silent in worship services. See Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 359-376; also Robertson and Plummer in regard to a Greek edict prohibiting women from pleading their own cases in court, which was enacted around 50 B.C., p. 325; also Kenneth J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 95-102.

¹³⁰ Romans 7:6, 12:2. ¹³¹ I Cor. 9:4-14. ¹³² I Cor. 9:14. ¹³³ I Cor. 9:12.

the women who are gifted with prayer and prophecy are exceptions to the ban on speaking in church. Their spiritual gifts serve the church, just as Paul's labors as a tent maker serve the good news of Christ and anger enables Plutarch's soldiers to better defend his country.

Paul rejected the biases of his culture when he permitted the Corinthian women to pray and prophesy in church, but he did not ignore the cultural mores altogether. He pointedly insisted that women who speak in church should wear veils. Although commentators are unsure of the significance of the veil,¹³⁴ it is obvious from the context of I Corinthians 11:2-16 that the sight of an unveiled women speaking in church offended many people. Thus, Paul advised these women to wear their veils when they shared their spiritual gifts in church. As a therapeutic ethicist, Paul adjusted his ethical prescriptions, so as to recognize the sensitivities of the general populace and yet not deny the women's freedom to use their spiritual gifts.

In proving his arguments, Paul often calls upon popular traditions and Graeco-Roman philosophies. He justifies his method of Christian education with the popular metaphor of an infant's development.¹³⁵ Paul also freely borrows the Graeco-Roman philosophical analogy of society as a body in order to illustrate his teachings on the gifts of the Spirit to the Church.¹³⁶ Paul's emphasis on practical application rather than

¹³⁴ Conzelmann, pp. 184-186; Morna D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of I Corinthians XI.10." New Testament Studies, X (1963-64), 410-16; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, All We're Meant To Be (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), pp. 64-67.

¹³⁵ I Cor. 3:2.

¹³⁶ I Cor. 12:12-31; Conzelmann, p. 10f; see also Chapter III for a further discussion on Paul's use of Graeco-Roman philosophy and traditions with reference to the "Body of Christ."

theory makes it easy for him to borrow from traditions, such as Gnosticism and Stoicism, which he often criticized.¹³⁷

CONCLUSION

Paul, like Plutarch, was a therapeutic ethicist. They shared the same presuppositions and strategies. As therapists they concentrated on practical problems rather than theory. Unlike the modern behaviorists, they never separated human actions from the inner life of the soul. They viewed themselves as physicians of the soul, who continually treated the moral illness of humanity.

The therapeutic strategies reflect this emphasis on practical solutions. Both Paul and Plutarch assumed that there were exceptions to their exhortations. They found themselves often challenging opinions and struggling to adapt their solutions to the sensitivities of the culture in which they lived.

Victor Furnish, Jack Sanders and Elaine Pagels' criticisms of Paul are valid but short-sighted. Paul did not address the logical epistemological or semantical sides of ethics.¹³⁸ He was not a theoretical ethicist. Like Plutarch, he was solely interested in normative ethics. Paul was a therapeutic ethicist who was primarily concerned with healing sick souls and changing behavior rather than giving "a systematic account of our judgments about conduct."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 155-162, 175-177; Robert M. Grant, "Hellenistic Elements in I Corinthians" in Allen Wikgren (ed.), Early Christian Origins (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), pp. 60-66.

¹³⁸ Furnish, p. 208-212, Sanders, p. 65; Pagels, p. 547.

¹³⁹ Dewey and Tufts, Ethics (1908) as cited by Furnish, p. 209.

Plutarch and Paul, however, differ in their respective ethical goals. Plutarch's objective is the achievement of individual perfection.¹⁴⁰ Paul, on the contrary, has a marked disregard for individual morality. The purpose of his ethics is to build the Body of Christ. This goal dominates every aspect of Paul's ethics. Even Christian freedom, especially women's freedom in church, is defined within the context of the needs of the community.

In chapter III we will examine how Paul's therapeutic ethics balances women's "freedom in Christ" against the need for order in the church. We will see how Paul defines freedom and order as principles which function within the Body of Christ. Neither of these values supercede the other, nor are they goals in themselves. For Paul, freedom exists only within the Christian Church and the church can only survive if there is order.

¹⁴⁰Grese, p. 12.

CHAPTER III

PAUL'S THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY-BASED ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

As a therapeutic ethicist, Paul is faced with a dilemma regarding women. Through Christ, they are equal with men and blessed with similar gifts.¹ But the use of their gifts threatens the harmony of the Corinthian church.² Freedom is creating chaos, Paul directs the Corinthians to re-establish order and peace in their worship services, in their relationships with new Christians, and in their marriages.³ But he does not advise them to repress the gifts of the Spirit. That would be a denial of God's power in their lives. In the midst of this confusion Paul must balance individual freedom against the needs of the local church.

In order to understand Paul's particular ethical choices, in regard to women, we need to look beyond individual passages and determine what was the goal and primary motive for his ethics. Is he basically afraid of disorder and determined to avoid social revolution at all costs, as Elaine Pagels suggests?⁴ Or is Paul an egalitarian, indifferent to the world's distinctions, as Scroggs contends?⁵ Or are both of these

¹I Cor. 11:5; Paul never mentions a distinction of gifts based on sex, I Cor. 12:4-11; cf. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, "Mulierum Virtutes (Moralia 242E-263C)" in Hans Dieter Betz (ed.) Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 106-134.

²I Cor. 14:1-33. ³I Cor. 11:17-34; 14:1-33; 8, and 7:1-7, 10-17.

⁴Elaine H. Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XLII (September 1974), 546.

⁵Robin Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XL (September 1974), 287.

stances subservient to a more encompassing goal? I argue that both order and equality are values for Paul because of their respective effects on the church. Paul desires order and freedom from domination because these precepts help build the church, which he describes as the Body of Christ. Building the Body of Christ is the overarching goal of Pauline ethics. The freedom of women in the church is defined within the context of the spiritual and physical growth of the Body of Christ.

Before we examine Paul's concept of the Body of Christ and its effect on the role of women in the church, let us evaluate the arguments supporting order (Pagels) or equality (Scroggs) as the dominant principle shaping Paul's statements on women. I believe that these principles function as opposing forces within Paul's ethics--forces which he continually balances in order to encourage the growth of the church. But understanding the importance of each principle is crucial to recognizing the need for a comprehensive ethical goal which can hold both order and equality in creative tension.

ORDER OR EQUALITY

Elaine Pagels blames Paul's fears of disorder for his "ambivalence" regarding women.⁶ She points out that in spite of his great pronouncement of equality in Galatians 3:27-28, Paul never intended that women renounce their subservient position in society. He only supported the first clause of the baptismal declaration of freedom. For Paul, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile" but the slave remains a slave and the woman retains her subservient role in society.⁷ According to Pagels, the great apostle of

⁶Pagels, p. 547. ⁷Pagels, pp. 545-47.

freedom is only concerned for Jewish and Greek free males and "does not challenge the institutions which regulate discrimination and subordination of slaves and women."⁸ He appears to advocate a double standard:

to continue observing kosher laws is to deny "the freedom for which Christ died," but to continue observing social, political and marital laws and conventions remains acceptable, even commendable."⁹

Pagels postulates that the reason why Paul demanded that the Jews eat with the Gentiles and yet allowed slavery and the subordination of women may be attributed to his fears of inducing a social revolution.

Pagels cites D. Cartlidge who suggests:

that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles remained, from the perspective of the larger society, a merely sectarian dispute. But for Paul to proclaim that certain basic structures of Hellenistic society--slavery and male domination--had been abolished "in Christ" might have meant nothing less than social revolution.¹⁰

According to Pagels, peace and order seem to be the over-riding principles of Paul's ethics. For the sake of order, Paul would ignore even his own pledge of freedom for women and slaves.

It is true that Paul is very concerned with order. He continually asks the churches to promote peace and order in their fellowships.¹¹ But, Paul rarely shows any fear of shaking the traditions that upheld his Judeo-Hellenistic society.¹² If Paul's primary interest was peace and order in society, he never would have challenged the Jewish purity laws

⁸Pagels, p. 545. ⁹Pagels, p. 545.

¹⁰D.R. Cartlidge, "I Corinthians 7 as a Foundation for a Christian Sex Ethic" pp. 4-5 cited by Pagels, p. 546.

¹¹I Cor. 14:33-40; 11:33, Romans 14 and 15.

¹²I disagree with Pagels' analysis of Romans 13. Paul is supporting the legal government and its authority not all social structures, cf. Pagels, p. 546.

which separated Jews from Gentile. This segregation may have been a "mere sectarian dispute,"¹³ but it was a very explosive one. The ramifications of Paul's unwavering insistence on the full acceptance of Greeks into the church shook not only the foundations of the Christian church but also the tenuous balance of authority that existed between Palestine and Rome.

The church was nearly torn apart by the unyielding position Paul adopted, in flagrant opposition to most of the leaders of the church--James, Peter and even Paul's own mentor Barnabus.¹⁴ A church council was called in order to discuss whether Greeks could be admitted into the church without circumcision and Torah obedience. Even after the Jerusalem Council agreed that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised or obey Jewish purification laws,¹⁵ Paul was faced with mounting opposition in Jerusalem to his teachings. Rome even became embroiled in this so-called sectarian conflict. According to Acts, riots broke loose in Jerusalem when Paul was seen in the temple with a man who was assumed to be a Greek.¹⁶ When the mob was quieted by the Roman soldiers, Paul spoke to the crowd, not about reconciliation, but of his divine commission to minister to the Gentiles.¹⁷ When the mob demanded his life, he audaciously forced the local authorities to bring his case to Rome. Far from being afraid of conflict, Paul seemed to insist upon raising the issue of the full acceptance of the Gentiles into the church even at the peril of his life.

Not only did Paul attack the biases of the Jewish Christians, but he also consistently defended the rights of slaves and women. If he had desired to retain the status quo, he never would have asked Philemon to

¹³Cartlidge, p. 4-5 in Pagels, p. 546. ¹⁴Gal. 2. ¹⁵Gal. 2; Acts 15.

¹⁶Acts 21:28-31. ¹⁷Acts 22:21.

regard his slave as a brother both in flesh and in the Lord.¹⁸ If a slave is your brother, how can you continue to treat him as chattel?

Women may have been content to keep their appointed place in Judeo-Hellenistic society if it had not been for Paul. He called them to be teachers, leaders and deacons.¹⁹ He even advised women to assert their independence from men by not marrying, if that was their call.²⁰ Far from keeping women in an orderly place, Paul encouraged them to use their gifts²¹ and to consider themselves equal partners in marriage.²²

Paul desired that all people stand as sisters and brothers in the church;²³ but can we conclude from this that equality was his overarching ethical principle? Robin Scroggs claims that Paul's ethics are motivated by "his gospel of justification by grace."²⁴ Thus performance or status is totally irrelevant. "Every person stands naked but free and equal before the giving God."²⁵ Scroggs believes that Paul was unconcerned with maintaining the present social order, for

the Community under Christ and in the Spirit cannot be compared with the old world, does not live out of its values (I Cor. 7:29-31), is not bound to its mores, its laws, its societal roles.²⁶

Pagels agrees with Scroggs that Paul has a radical vision of freedom and equality for women in the church.²⁷ But the question still remains, why did Paul not act upon this vision? If Paul valued equality more than order, then the "new humanity" that transformed the relationships between Greeks and Jews would likewise have revolutionized the relationships

¹⁸Philemon 16. ¹⁹I Cor. 11:5, Phil. 2:4, Romans 16:1-16. ²⁰I Cor. 7:25.

²¹I Cor. 11:5. ²²I Cor. 7:2-4, 11:11. ²³Gal. 3:27-28.

²⁴Scroggs, p. 291. ²⁵Scroggs, p. 288. ²⁶Scroggs, p. 287.

²⁷Pagels, p. 544f; Scroggs, p. 302.

between men and women.²⁸ The deutero-Pauline authors and the modern church could not have advocated male-supremacy if Paul had clearly denounced every traditional form of male chauvinism.²⁹ But Paul clings to tradition in asking women to wear veils when they preach and prophesy,³⁰ and in reminding women to be silent in church.³¹

Thus, neither equality nor order appears to be the dominant principle in Paul's ethics. Paul's mission was not primarily to build an egalitarian community or an orderly society. All Paul's work was aimed at building the Body of Christ. This is the key to understanding his attitude toward women.

BUILDING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Building the Body of Christ differs fundamentally from Plutarch's goal of individual perfection.³² Plutarch's ethics are a method for achieving virtues. The struggle is solitary and only a few people ever attain "the absolute and perfect good."³³ Paul, however, is almost totally disinterested in personal achievement.³⁴ He even belittled his

²⁸Pagels, p. 545 ²⁹cf. Scroggs, p. 303. ³⁰I Cor. 11:5.

³¹I Cor. 34b-36. I disagree with Scroggs (p. 294) and Pagels (p. 544) regarding the authenticity of this passage. See Chapter I.

³²Plutarch, "Progress in Virtue" in his Moralia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), I, 401-457; William C. Greese, "De Profectibus in Virtute (Moralia 75A-86A)" in Betz, p. 14.

³³Plutarch, "Progress in Virtue," 75C, p. 401.

³⁴Lists of virtues are included in Paul's epistles but they are not the aim of his ethics. See I Cor. 5:11, 2 Cor. 6:6, Phil. 4:8, also Hans Conzelmann, I Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 100f., especially p. 101, n. 69.

own attainments.³⁵ According to the epistle to the Romans, individual perfection is impossible because human beings are never free from sin.³⁶

Paul is more concerned with the development of a community than with individual achievement. The community is not just a collection of believers but a corporate union of people who he describes as the Body of the risen Christ. Building this Body of Christ is not merely a matter of converting new members or encouraging the present members to a deeper spiritual awareness. The formation of the living church is a therapeutic process which continually balances the need for order with the demands for freedom. Each of these aspects of Paul's ethics--the Body of Christ and the process of developing of that Body--needs to be analyzed before we can really understand Paul's position on the role of women in the church.

Paul's ethics were not deontological or legalistic; he judged individual actions to be good or bad according to the effect they had on the spiritual and physical growth of the church. Paul's denunciation of intercourse with prostitutes provides a striking example of his commitment to the community, which he calls the Body of Christ, over the individual. In I Corinthians 6:12-20, he admonishes believers not to go to prostitutes because "your bodies are members of Christ."³⁷ It is not the individual's purity or the integrity of the prostitute that primarily concerned Paul.³⁸ Debauchery is evil because the Christian unites not just himself, but all the members of Christ's Body with the harlot.

This concept of the Body of Christ forms the basis of Paul's

³⁵Phil. 3:4-8. ³⁶Romans 7: Grese, p. 15. ³⁷I Cor. 6:15.

³⁸cf. Conzelmann's implication that Paul is concerned with de-humanizing the realm of sexuality, p. 111.

ethics.³⁹ All other ethical tenets, from sexual purity to kindness, are seen as means which are advocated because they encourage the growth of the church. Paul, however, did not invent the concept of the Body of Christ,⁴⁰ as Käsemann points out, the apostle never carefully explains this analogy; he merely assumes that it is a familiar formula.⁴¹

The corporate image of humanity was a popular metaphor in the Greek and Roman world long before the advent of Christianity. Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and numerous other philosophers and historians often described the state in terms of the human body.⁴² Livy traced the origin of the metaphor to Menenius Agrippa--an early Roman leader who used the illustration of the state as human body in order to reconcile warring plebian and patrician factions.⁴³ Agrippa's description of the interdependence of the two classes bears a striking resemblance to Paul's analogy of the Church in I Corinthians 12.

In the days when all the parts of the human body were not as now agreeing together, but each member took its own course and spoke its own speech, the other members, indignant at seeing that everything acquired by their care and labour and ministry went to the

³⁹ A.T. Robinson John, The Body (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), p. 9f; cf. Robin Scroggs, Paul for a New Day (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 49.

⁴⁰ Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 263; other sources cited by Ernest Käsemann, "Motif of the Body of Christ," in his Perspectives on Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 105, n. 10.

⁴¹ Käsemann, p. 105; Robinson, p. 49.

⁴² Marcus Tullius Cicero, "Of Offices," 3.5.22, in his Three Books of Offices (London: Bell, 1897), II.xxi.7, p. 235f; Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Meditations (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952, 2.1, p. 256. For further references see Conzelmann, I Corinthians, n. 8, p. 211.

⁴³ Livy, The History of Rome (New York: Ditton, 1926), I.xxxii.

belly, whilst it, undisturbed in the middle of them all, did nothing but enjoy the pleasures provided for it, entered into a conspiracy; the hands were not to bring food to the mouth, the mouth was not to accept it when offered, the teeth were not to masticate it. Whilst, in their resentment, they were anxious to coerce the belly by starving it, the members themselves wasted away, and the whole body was reduced to the last stage of exhaustion. Then it became evident that the belly rendered no idle service, and the nourishment it received was no greater than that which it bestowed by returning to all parts of the body this blood by which we live and are strong, equally distributed into the veins, after being matured by the digestion of the food.⁴⁴

Seneca later transformed the body analogy into metaphysical terms.

All that you behold, that which comprises both God and man, is one--we are the parts of one great body. Nature produced us related to one another, since she created us from the same source and to the same end. She engendered in us mutual affection and made us prone to friendships.⁴⁵

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus employed this corporate image of humanity in his ethical writings. He described cooperation and kindness not merely as personal virtues but as prerequisites for human interaction. Just as the eyes by nature coordinate with the hands, so human beings are made for harmonious cooperation.⁴⁶ It is foolish to think of oneself as an independent atom, for each person is a "member (*μέλος*) of the system of rational beings."⁴⁷ This is the same word (*μέλος*) which Paul uses in I Cor. 6:15, 12:12, 12:27 and Romans 12:5 to describe the inter-relationships of Christians to one another.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Livy, I. xxxii.

⁴⁵ Seneca, Epistle, 95.52 as cited in Conzelmann, I Corinthians, n. 8, p. 211.

⁴⁶ Aurelius Antoninus, Meditations, 2.1. ⁴⁷ Aurelius Antoninus, Meditations, 7.13.

⁴⁸ Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1957), p. 502f.

Paul was influenced not only by Graeco-Roman historians and philosophers, but also by contemporary religious applications of the body metaphor. The Gnostics mythologized the corporate identity of humanity. In the Anthropos myth, the deity descends to earth and assimilates the human race into its body, achieving salvation for mankind.⁴⁹

Hebrew and rabbinic literature also utilized the concept of corporate solidarity. Adam was not just an individual; he represented the whole human race.⁵⁰ His sin affected all of humanity. Abraham, likewise stood for the people of God.⁵¹ His obedience initiated the covenant for all of his descendants.⁵²

Many commentators believe that Paul conceives of the church, not as a metaphor of Christ's Body, but as a mystical representation of Christ.⁵³ The church is not like the Body of Christ, the church is the Body of Christ.⁵⁴ Karl Barth attempts to explain Paul's concept of corporate identity:

⁴⁹ Geddes MacGregor, Corpus Christi (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 158.

⁵⁰ Genesis 1-3. ⁵¹ Genesis 15:1-21; 18:18-19.

⁵² Genesis 22:1-19. See also MacGregor, p. 161.

⁵³ Hans Lietzmann, An Die Korinther I-II, (Tubingen: Mohr, 1949), p. 62f; Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (New York: Hold, 1931), p. 117f. Eduard Schweizer, "σῶμα", Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 1069-1074.

⁵⁴ Robinson, p. 51-60, esp. n. 1, p. 59f; Käsemann, pp. 102-121.

Believers...are therefore in their fullgrown and no way attenuated individuality, one body, one individual in Christ. They are not a mass of individuals, not even a corporation, a personified society, or a totality, but The Individual, The One, The New Man.⁵⁵

Albert Schweitzer defines this solidarity as essentially mystical and eternal. The Mystical Body of Christ is "the predestined solidarity of the Elect with one another and with the Messiah."⁵⁶

The practical ramifications of this union can be seen in Paul's proscriptions and prescriptions to the Corinthian congregation. The believer who sleeps with a prostitute, in light of Genesis 2:24, makes the harlot one flesh with the Body of Christ. There is no such thing as a private or individual sin. Each member's life affects the whole church. To Paul's horror, the Corinthians are not only weakening the entire church by their immorality, but they are even denying their basic union in Christ.⁵⁷ Factionalism is really dismemberment.⁵⁸ The church is not an association or federation. The church is the living Body of Christ. Paul emphatically demands that the local church be of one mind, undivided in their loyalty to Christ and unwavering in their commitment to each other.⁵⁹

ORDER AND FREEDOM IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Immorality and schismatics are not the only threats to the Body of Christ. The church at Corinth is plagued by a "multiplicity of gifts, possibilities and demonstrations" which are "threatening to break up the

⁵⁵Karl Barth, Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 443.

⁵⁶Schweitzer, p. 117. ⁵⁷I Cor.1:10-17. ⁵⁸Robinson, p. 51.

⁵⁹I Cor. 1:10, 11:22, 29-32; Phil. 4:2.

unity of the church.⁶⁰ The (χειροτονεῖς) are not merely the gifts of tongues or prophecy but include all the manifestations of the Spirit in a Christian's life.⁶¹ Administration, teaching, healing, service, and even donating to the church are described by Paul as spiritual gifts.⁶² Each member of the church is assumed to be gifted and called to use his or her gifts for the benefit of the church.

But this is precisely the cause of the disruption in the Corinthian church. The members are misusing their spiritual gifts and the church is in a state of chaos. Some Christians are scandalizing new members by eating meat sacrificed to idols. They think that their superior knowledge frees them from traditional laws.⁶³ Prophets are interrupting worship services and each other to the confusion of the congregation.⁶⁴ Glossalalists are entertaining the congregation with meaningless babble and have become a source of ridicule by non-Christians.⁶⁵ Even the women in church are disrupting the services by taking off their traditional veils and asking questions during worship.⁶⁶

Paul applies his therapeutic principles to the Corinthian situation in an attempt to restore order without destroying the freedom of the Spirit. For Paul, freedom is not an absolute human right. In fact, it is not a right at all. Freedom is a gift of the Spirit which Christians receive at Baptism.

⁶⁰Käsemann, p. 118. ⁶¹Romans 12:6; I Cor. 12:28, 31, 14:1-33.

⁶²Romans 12, I Cor. 12; Conzelmann, "χειροτονεῖς," in Kittel, IX, 402-406.

⁶³I Cor. 8. ⁶⁴I Cor. 14:29-33. ⁶⁵I Cor. 14:23.

⁶⁶I Cor. 11:5; 14:33b-36.

Since the world is in slavery to sin, only through Christ can people be free to love themselves, each other and God. Paul believes that, without Christ there is no freedom, merely slavery to "ungodliness and wickedness."⁶⁷ Thus, only in the community of people who accept Christ, can freedom really exist. Accordingly, it is both a gift given in the church and a gift subject to the needs of the church.⁶⁸

Paul's own life reflects his concept of freedom within the church. As a Roman citizen and a Jew, Paul has a high regard for freedom. He continually refers to his own freedom in Christ.⁶⁹ But at the same time, he exercises his freedom by relinquishing his rights to marry or be paid for his ministry.⁷⁰ He does not deny his legal right to be paid by the local churches, a right that Paul claims goes back to Moses and is affirmed by Christ himself.⁷¹

Paul declares that he is free from the law, yet he willingly obeys Torah regulations for the sake of the Jerusalem church. According to Acts, he submits to the temple ritual of purification, and even pays for four other men to have their heads shaved.⁷² Paul is not ashamed of his obedience to the Law but boasts:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jew I become a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I become as one under the law--though not being myself under the law--that I might win those under the law.⁷³

⁶⁷ Romans 1:18; Romans 6:17-23; 8:1-17; Gal. 5:1; Hans Dieter Betz, "Paul's Concept of Freedom in the Context of Hellenistic Discussions About Possibilities of Human Freedom" (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union & University of California, 1977), pp. 7-10.

⁶⁸ Betz, "Paul's Concept of Freedom..." p. 6.

⁶⁹ I Cor. 6:12, 9:1. ⁷⁰ I Cor. 9:5; I Cor. 7. ⁷¹ I Cor. 9:8-14.

⁷² Acts 21:18-26. ⁷³ I Cor. 9:19-20.

In regard to every phase of his life, Paul tries to use his freedom for the sake of the church. He encourages the Corinthians to adopt this same attitude toward personal freedom.⁷⁴ They should refrain from eating meat sacrificed to idols, not because they believe in idols, but for the sake of the weaker members of the church.⁷⁵ Women are also advised to be sensitive to the mores of the local congregation. In Corinth the women seem to be scandalizing the church by not wearing veils when they pray or prophesy.⁷⁶ Paul gives a lengthy analysis of the reasons why a woman should wear a veil. Many commentators have assumed in the past that the apostle considers the veil to be a sign of submission to men, but this interpretation is being re-examined.

The point of contention centers around the rationale behind Paul's insistence that women wear veils while praying and prophesying. I Cor. 10:11 is the pivotal passage: "On account of this a woman ought to have authority on her head on account of the angels."⁷⁷ Apart from the

⁷⁴ I Cor. 10:31-33.

⁷⁵ I Cor. 8:7ff; Romans 14; see also the idea of self-sacrifice in Plutarch, "On Brotherly Love," in his Moralia VI, 484 E-F, pp. 283-285; H.D. Betz, "De Fraterno Amore" in his Plutarch's Ethical Writings..., p. 252.

⁷⁶ I Cor. 11:5.

⁷⁷ The translation is my own from The Greek New Testament, ed. K. Aland and others 2d ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1968). The R.S.V. translates the passage by using the word "veil" for "authority" following Kittel's interpretation of the Greek word based on an Aramaic word and on variant textual readings. Morna D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of I Cor. 11:10," New Testament Studies, X (1963/64), 413, and Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 189 believe that this interpretation is rather abstruse.

confusing role the angels play in this exhortation,⁷⁸ there are many questions regarding the meaning of the word "authority," (Εξουσία). The Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament translates the word as "the ability to do something, capability, might, power."⁷⁹ Yet, Goodspeed and Lias interpret this word to mean, that the veil "symbolizes her subjection"⁸⁰ or is "a covering in sign that she is under subjection to her husband."⁸¹ J.A. Fitzmyer and many other modern critics discount this interpretation because Εξουσία cannot be translated passively.⁸² "Εξουσία" should indicate a power that the woman possesses or exercises (cf. Rev. xi.6; xiv.8; xx.6) not one to which she is subjected or subordinated.⁸³

The reason for the veil is most likely based on social custom either of the Christian churches⁸⁴ or of the Jewish or Hellenistic cultures.⁸⁵ In 11:6, Paul compares the unveiled head of a woman to her being shorn. For a man to have his hair cut off was a sign of a religious

⁷⁸ J.A. Fitzmeyer, "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the New Testament," New Testament Studies, IV (1957-58), 53-58.

⁷⁹ Bauer, p. 277.

⁸⁰ Edgar Goodspeed, in J.M.P. Smith (ed.) The Complete Bible, An American Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) New Testament Section, p. 162 cited by Fitzmyer, p. 49.

⁸¹ J.J. Lias, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1888), p. 108, n. 10.

⁸² Fitzmyer, p. 51; Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 189; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, All We're Meant To Be (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975) p. 65.

⁸³ Fitzmyer, p. 51. ⁸⁴ Fitzmyer, p. 48.

⁸⁵ Conzelmann, I Corinthians, pp. 184-186, cf. Fitzmyer, p. 48.

vow,⁸⁶ but for a woman it was a sign of disgrace.⁸⁷ Thus, Paul seems to be asking women to wear veils when they pray and prophesy, out of respect for the sensitivities of the other church members, not as a sign of subjection to a husband or to all men.

Paul did not intend his prescription regarding the veil to be an eternal law, but rather a practical guideline aimed at quelling the disorder in Corinth. A similar approach is taken toward the women who are asking questions during the worship service and, thus, disrupting it. He is not asking for all women at all times to be silent. He is addressing a particular problem that existed in the Corinthian congregation.

Paul is really asking the Corinthian women to implement their freedom as full members of the church, by choosing not to disrupt the worship service. Their quietude is a sign of their self-control, not their submissiveness. The women, like the men, are free in Christ. They are free to choose how to use their freedom. Paul urges the women to follow his example. He refuses to be married, to be paid for his ministry, or to be free of the Law, not because he considers himself a subordinate person, but because these renunciations enable him to better serve the church.⁸⁸ Likewise, Paul is not asking the Corinthian women to renounce their freedom in Christ, but merely to use it for the edification of the church.

CONCLUSION

Paul does not sacrifice women's freedom for the sake of order.

⁸⁶Acts 21:24. ⁸⁷I Cor. 11:6; Hooker, p. 410.

⁸⁸I Cor. 10:32-33.

Pagels is correct in stating that Paul did not want to change all society.⁸⁹ Paul neither had the political power nor the desire for a social revolution. Paul's mission was to establish churches and encourage their development. In order to attain this goal, he needed to continually balance Christian freedom with order. He could not risk alienating people by ignoring their cultural mores,⁹⁰ nor deny the gospel by insisting on the subjection of women, slaves or Greeks. Paul acted like a therapist measuring his prescriptions so that they cure one illness without inducing another.

The aim of his ethics was to establish healthy churches. For Paul, the church was healthy only when it was functioning as the Body of Christ. This is an organic definition rather than a teleological or deontological one. Paul did not believe that the church's goal was to save the world. Only Christ could save anyone. Nor did the church exist merely to obey God's commandments. Each person could hypothetically do that by his or herself. For Paul, the church was ordained by God to be Christ in the world, sharing the gospel and serving humanity and God in love.

Disorder and factionalism are threats to the wellbeing of the Body of Christ. Paul insists that order be maintained in the churches, otherwise the actions of one group will be detrimental to the growth of another group.⁹¹ But, Paul does not deny freedom to any Christians, only the irresponsible use of freedom. For women to ask questions during worship or to take off the customary veil, is seen by Paul as an abuse of their freedom in Christ. The Corinthian women are reminded by Paul to use their freedom to edify the church and not for their self glorification.⁹²

⁸⁹ Pagels, p. 545. ⁹⁰ cf. Scroggs, "Paul and Eschatological Woman," p. 287.

⁹¹ I Cor. 11, 14. ⁹² I Cor. 14:26c, 36.

Pagels and Scroggs are both correct. Paul wanted order and equality in the churches. Neither of these principles, however, was the goal of his ethics. Building the Body of Christ was the primary motive behind all of Paul's exhortations. He did not openly denounce every form of male chauvinism, nor did he demand that women retain their customary subservient roles. As a therapeutic ethicist, Paul worked with the particular problems of each church. The Corinthian church was advised to balance their freedom in Christ which was being expressed by the enthusiastic use of their gifts, with the need for order in the church. Paul was not theorizing about the nature of women when he asked them not to wear veils, or not to talk during worship, he was simply addressing a particular problem in a particular culture. To generalize these statements and insist that all women leaders wear veils and all women refrain from talking in church would be to ignore the therapeutic nature of his ethics.

Paul spoke to the situations of his day, but I do not believe that he is an "anachronism."⁹³ Pagels is correct in insisting that our situation differs from Paul's.⁹⁴ We cannot adopt Corinthian precepts, but his therapeutic community-based ethics can offer us a fruitful approach to our contemporary struggles with women's liberation in the church.

In Chapter IV we will apply Paul's ethics to the confusion and chaos we are experiencing in our local churches. We will analyze both the traditionalists' definition of order and the radical feminists' description of freedom. Then we will evaluate both order and freedom from the Christian feminists' perspective, in light of Paul's therapeutic community-based approach to ethics. I believe that Paul's ethics offers us a model for building the Body of Christ without repression or anarchy.

⁹³ Pagels, p. 547.

⁹⁴ Pagels, p. 547.

CHAPTER IV

THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY-BASED ETHICS AND THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Two groups of dedicated believers are deadlocked in a battle over the essential nature of the church: the traditionalists are eager to protect the church from anarchy while Christian feminists are committed to the liberation of women in the church. The traditionalists believe that the patriarchal order is the foundation of the church. This is the order which, they argue, conforms to the Bible, the Christian understanding of self-sacrificial love, and human need. Christian feminists reject the male hierarchical order precisely because it represses the spiritual gifts of women. Unlike the radical feminists, they refuse to accept the traditionalists' interpretation of the Scriptures and Christian love. They contend that freedom is not only necessary for everyone but that the Bible and Christ's example of love proclaim social equality of the sexes.

Paul's ethical exhortations have been used by each of these factions to justify both a male hierarchy¹ and sexual equality in the church.² Unfortunately, both of these groups have ignored the context in which their favorite maxims are found. They have ignored Paul's emphasis

¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961), III/4, 172-176.

²Robin Scroggs, Paul For a New Day (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, All We're Meant To Be (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975).

on communal therapy which determines not only the significance of his exhortations on order in the church and freedom, but also their applicability to new situations.

In this chapter we will examine both the traditionalists' and feminists' evaluation of the church. Then we will turn to Paul and see how his concepts of order, freedom and Christian love may be used to break the deadlock between these two warring factions. We will see how Paul's ethical presuppositions and his strategies for healing the Body of Christ may offer a fruitful approach to our contemporary struggle over sexual equality in the church.

THE TRADITIONALISTS' ARGUMENT

The fear of chaos rather than the desire for male domination is the primary impetus behind the traditional defense of the patriarchy. Karl Barth voiced this anxiety in his classic denunciation of woman's liberation.

The establishment of an equality with man might well lead to a state of affairs in which her (woman's) position is genuinely and irreparably deplorable because both it and that of the man are as it were left hanging in the void.³

Many Christians fear that a revolution affecting the traditional roles of women will not only reduce the church to a state of anarchy, but will also obliterate the identity of individuals and the church.

Paul Jewett defines the hierachial view of human relationships as:

³Barth, p. 171.

one which says that the headship of the man is a divine absolute, transcending relativities of time and place. The primary model of all social relationships is the family, in which the woman as wife is subject to the man as husband even as the children are subject in all things to their parents.⁴

The rationale supporting this point of view is three-fold:

- (1) God ordained that women be subordinate to men.
- (2) Female submissiveness is a reflection of Christ's self-sacrificial love.
- (3) The patriarchal order is necessary for the functioning of the church.

The divinely ordained subordination of women is a teaching that is promulgated by many Catholics and Protestants. Both groups claim that the Bible and experience justify the patriarchal structure of the church. Catholics are fond of quoting Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3. Thomas begins his discussion on the creation of women by analyzing the word 'helpmate,' which is used to describe Eve.⁵ He insists that she was not created to help Adam in all his tasks, "since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works, but only as a helper in the work of generation."⁶

Experience, Thomas believes, adequately confirms his statement that woman "is defective and misbegotten."⁷ He even theorizes that women were born by accident for:

⁴Paul Jewett, Man As Male and Female (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) p. 51.

⁵Gen. 2:18.

⁶Thomas Aquinas, The Summa Theologica (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952) p. 489.

⁷Thomas Aquinas, p. 489.

Male seeds naturally produce male fetuses unless they have a defect, or "some eternal change, such as that of a south wind, which is moist," affects their development.⁸

In his reflection on Genesis 3, Thomas laments the servile subjection that befell womankind after sin entered the world. However, he contends that sin is not the cause of women's inferiority; rather, God created woman's nature so that she is subordinate to man. This "economic or civil subjection"⁹ is based on the premise that men are naturally wiser than women, and thus should rule the inferior sex for the sake of an ordered family and society.¹⁰

This notion of a divinely willed hierarchy motivates much of the Protestant insistence on sexual inequality. Theologians, such as Karl Barth, reject the medieval view of women's ontological inferiority. Barth ridicules the typological descriptions of women as sensual, illogical intuitive, artistic, passive, nurturing and subjective creatures; but he still contends that God wills for women to be subordinate to men. Barth believes that female subordination is revealed in both the Pauline and Pastoral epistles.¹¹ The "divine command"¹² is therefore the justification for man's superiority to woman. This male superiority is "related and directed to woman in preceding her, taking the lead as the inspirer, leader and initiator in their common being and action."¹³ Men, thus, are not spiritually superior to women, but Barth believes that God has given them the responsibility of leadership. Women were consequently ordained to be "behind and subordinate."¹⁴ If women rebel against their subordinate place,

⁸Thomas Aquinas, p. 489. ⁹Thomas Aquinas, p. 489. ¹⁰Thomas Aquinas, p. 489.

¹¹Barth, III/4, 152f-177. ¹²Barth, III/4, 176. ¹³Barth, III/4, 170.

¹⁴Barth, III/4, 171.

Barth accuses them of denying their own sexuality and choosing anarchy over "the goodness and justice of divine order."¹⁵

Many Christians do not accept Thomas' degrading opinion of women or Barth's interpretation of God's will. They do, however, view the woman's liberation movement as an abnegation of the self-sacrificial ethic of the Christian life.¹⁶ Ephesians 5:22--"Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord"--is often quoted by theologians, such as John Howard Yoder, as the model for all relationships between men and women.¹⁷ Yoder urges women to accept their subordinate role as a reflection of Jesus' self-sacrificing love:

The wife or child or slave who can accept subordination because "it is fitting in the Lord" has not forsaken the radicality of the call of Jesus; it's precisely this attitude toward the structures of the world, this freedom from needing to smash them since they are about to crumble away, which Jesus had been the first to teach and in his suffering to concretize.¹⁸

Thus, by being submissive to men, women--who are continually referred to as 'wives'--not only preserve the traditional order of the church, but they also testify to the Christian virtue of selflessness.

More realistic Christians doubt whether woman's submissiveness truly encourages men to avow the life of the cross. Experience tends to undermine Barth's and Yoder's claim that a submissive woman brings out the best virtues in men.¹⁹ Psychologists report that 'Christian submissiveness' easily becomes a form of masochism, which encourages males to respond in a

¹⁵ Barth, III/4, 171.

¹⁶ John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) pp. 163-192.

¹⁷ Yoder, p. 190. ¹⁸ Yoder, p. 192.

¹⁹ Barth, III/4, 172; Yoder, p. 190.

sadistic manner.²⁰ These Christians however defend the patriarchal order of the church because of its clarity and stability. They contend that women's liberation will blur individual distinctions and destroy the established order of the church. Elizabeth Elliot believes that:

For the tremendous vision of hierachial blessedness...the feminist substitutes a vision of blessedness which holds all human beings on a level plain--a faceless, colorless, sexless wasteland..."²¹

This fear of egalitarianism is based on the assumption that personal identity is affirmed or denied by the role one plays in society. Thus, men are encouraged to seek positions of leadership and authority to reaffirm their masculinity. Women are discouraged from leadership roles which are described as "masculine."²² These sex-role stereotypes not only go unquestioned by anti-feminists, they are actually lauded as the basis for a well-ordered church.²³ Consequently the roles in many churches are apportioned to individuals according to their gender--men as leaders, women as followers--rather than according to the gifts each person has received from the Spirit.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

The feminist's position on freedom and order in the church is not monolithic. The radical feminists, such as Mary Daly and Sheila Collins,

²⁰Mary Jo Meadow, "Psychological Perspectives on Wifely Submission: A Growth Relationship Style?" a paper presented "Workshop: Wifely Submission" in the Women and Religion section at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, November, 1978, New Orleans.

²¹Elisabeth Elliot, cited by Harold Lindsell, "Egalitarianism and Scriptural Infallibility," Christianity Today, XX, 12 (March 1976), 45.

²²Meadow, p. 3f. ²³Barth, III/4, 169.

believe that "the church is the enemy."²⁴ They contend that women can only be free outside of the church because the church could not survive without its patriarchal structure. Other feminists such as Rosemary Reuther, Carter Heyward, Letha Scanzoni, Nancy Hardesty and Letty Russell argue that Christian women are freed by Christ to reform the patriarchal structures which hinder the gospel message. Each of these positions must be closely examined in order to delineate the views of the Christian feminists from those of the radical feminists who reject Christianity as essentially sexist.

The Radical Feminists' Position

Although the radical feminists vehemently reject the male hierachial structure in the church, they do not question either the Biblical or theological assumptions on which it is based. Mary Daly frankly admits that she is uninterested in reexamining the Bible to see if it authentically supports a hierachial church. It is enough for her that traditionalists are able to use some scriptural texts to support their viewpoint. She, thus, assumes that their interpretation is justified since "for nearly two thousand years the passages have been used to enforce sexual hierarchy."²⁵

The radical feminists accept the traditional interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3. They resent the description of a masculine God who creates a woman to be named and ruled by a man. But instead of challenging

²⁴ Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 155, citing Betty Frieden; Sheila D. Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974), p. 45.

²⁵ Daly, p. 5.

this narrow interpretation of the creation story, Daly and Collins reject the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. They insist that women should create their own world and "name the self, the world and God."²⁶ The Bible can then be supplemented or even replaced by stories about women and their search for transcendence.²⁷ The traditionalists and radical feminists also share the same biases in regard to Christ and his teachings. Both groups emphasize the fact that Jesus was a male and that he lived and preached a life of self-sacrifice. Christ is, therefore, labeled by these feminists as an enemy of women both in his maleness and in his teachings. Collins and Daly cannot accept the dogma that God was incarnate only in a man and thus all women are forever dependent on this man, Jesus, for their salvation.²⁸ They agree with Pope Paul VI that Jesus' maleness was not incidental, but a fundamental aspect of his mission.²⁹

The radical feminists contend that Christianity is essentially a religion which glorifies self-renunciation. Influenced by the traditionalists, they translate Jesus' command to "Love one another as I have loved you"³⁰ as a stimulus for the victimization of women. Mary Daly describes the effects of this command:

²⁶Daly, p. 8; Collins, pp. 217-224.

²⁷Daly, p. 7; Collins, pp. 41-45; for an example see Judith Plaskow Goldenberg, "Epilogue: The Coming of Lilith," in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed.) Religion and Sexism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 341-343.

²⁸Daly, p. 78f.

²⁹For further information on Pope Paul's attitude toward women see Sr. A.M. McGrath, Women and the Church (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 7-9.

³⁰John 13:34.

While the sacrificial victim may inspire saintliness in a few, in the many the effect seems to evoke intolerance. That is, rather than being able to imitate the sacrifice of Jesus, they feel guilt and transfer this to "the Other," thus making the latter "imitate" Jesus in the role of scapegoat. It appears that what happens is that those under the yoke of Christian imagery often are driven to a kind of reversal of what this imagery ostensibly means. Unable to shoulder the blame for others, they can affirm themselves as "good" by blaming others.³¹

Thus, women have become the scapegoats of the Christian church. They are taught the virtues of a victim: passivity, long-suffering, humility, meekness, etc.; but they are not even allowed to identify with the Divine Scapegoat. They are powerless victims, who are continually urged to seek salvation through a male savior preached by a male hierarchy.³²

Having rejected the traditionalists' description of God, Christ and self-sacrificial love, Daly and Collins urge women to leave the church in order to experience their own freedom and personhood. They believe that women will never fulfill their own needs as long as they are part of a church which is controlled by men.³³ But, once again, the radicals agree with the traditionalists in assuming that the church is fundamentally patriarchal and can never change its present structure. Thus, they contend that evacuation is the only recourse. Women need to separate from the church in order to create themselves and discover the transcendence beyond God the Father and Christ.³⁴ Sheila Collins describes the feminist vision of a religious community as:

³¹Daly, p. 76. ³²Daly, p. 17.

³³In Beyond God the Father (p. 144) Mary Daly, like Collins (p. 231) invited men to join the emerging sisterhoods; but in her latest book, Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), separatism is advocated (pp. 380-384).

³⁴Daly, Gyn/Ecology, pp. 380-384.

one which is not defined by a set of beliefs or traditions but by its ability to include the full range of human experience in its purview, by its ability to generate life and a practical hope, by its ability to become self-actualized and to meet the problems of the world with courage, determination, effectiveness and sensitivity to the plurality of creation.³⁵

Mary Daly even alters Jesus' description of the church to read, "Whenever two or three Self-affirming women are gathered together in our own names we are lighting our Fire."³⁶ For these feminists there is no order, no Creator, no Christ, no self-less love, no definite source of revelation and, for Daly, no men in this radical vision of a religious community.

The Christian Feminists' Perspective

Both the traditionalists and the Christian feminists are appalled by Daly and Collins' "female idolatry" and separatism.³⁷ Christian feminists, however, reject not only the conclusions of the radicals, but also the assumptions that led them to their renunciation of the church. They point to the unquestioning acceptance of the traditionalists' interpretation of Scripture and Christian love by the radicals as another example of women letting the patriarchy interpret for them. Feminists such as Rosemary Ruether, Letty Russell, Robin Scroggs, Phyllis Trible, and Paul Jewett, insist upon searching the Scriptures for themselves and evaluating Christian theology without the blinders of sexism. They believe that there is an alternative to patriarchy and separatism.

³⁵Collins, p. 231. ³⁶Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 380.

³⁷Carter Heyward, "Ruether and Daly: Theologians Speaking and Sparking, Building and Burning," Christianity and Crisis, XXXIX, 5 (April 2, 1979), 72.

Biblical scholars, who have been influenced by the women's liberation movement, are carefully reexamining the texts which have been used by the traditionalist to keep women in an inferior place in the church. They are discovering that just as Paul's words to the Corinthians have long been misinterpreted as an affirmation of sexual discrimination,³⁸ so have Genesis 2 and 3. Phyllis Trible points out that 'adham, the first human, was neither male nor female, but androgynous. She contends that Eve, being the last creation, could logically be viewed as the culmination of God's creation, rather than as an afterthought. This interpretation is more consistent with the Hebrew concept of order, as developed in Genesis 1, where the more complex creatures are formed last, than Barth's notion of precedence. According to Trible, it is only when the woman was created that the male came into being. She further states that the male did not name the woman until after they had sinned. He merely addressed her as 'ishshah, woman, and himself as 'ish, man. Trible argues that even the first sin cannot be blamed on woman's natural weakness, for she struggled independently with the serpent's words and did not stop to ask the man for his permission or advice. It is the man who unhesitatingly ate the forbidden fruit, not the woman.³⁹

The effect of their sin was that both the man and the woman were alienated from God, nature and each other. The woman's natural desire for her husband became a means by which he controlled her.⁴⁰ This description

³⁸See Chapter II.

³⁹Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," Journal of American Academy of Religion, XLI (1973), 35-42.

⁴⁰Gen. 3:16.

of the ramifications of sin is not heralded as the divine will for marital relationships nor the ontologically necessary condition between men and women. Subordination of the wife to the husband is interpreted in Genesis 3 as a sign of sin.⁴¹

Christian feminists not only differ with the traditionalists and radicals' interpretation of Scripture, but they also disagree with both groups' understanding of Christ and his example of love. Christian feminists, who have been influenced by liberation theology, reject the basic dichotomy Daly and Collins establish between the male and female, between the male savior and Christian women.⁴² They believe that emphasizing differences between the sexes, as the radicals and traditionalists do, has led to the subordination and subjection of women.⁴³ Recent psychological studies support their contention that "where sexual differences are highly emphasized; a person of the opposite sex is more likely seen as a threatening other with whom genuine intimacy is difficult."⁴⁴ Christian feminists stress Christ's actions rather than his maleness.⁴⁵ The mission of Christ is viewed as being more important than his anatomy. Thus, even Mary Daly, who is obsessed with Jesus' sexuality, will agree that, if we look at his actions, "Jesus was a feminist."⁴⁶ He treated women with the same respect

⁴¹ Scanzoni and Hardesty, p. 35.

⁴² Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective--A Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 139.

⁴³ Heyward, p. 70; Rosemary Radford Ruether "Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Savior Help Women?" Occasional Papers, I, 13 (December 25, 1976), 2-9.

⁴⁴ Meadow, p. 3. ⁴⁵ Russell, p. 138. ⁴⁶ Daly, Beyond, p. 73.

and dignity that he bestowed to men.⁴⁷

Jesus not only practiced and preached sexual equality, he also embodied the liberation of men and women from subjection. He was God suffering with all people so that sin and death might be forever conquered.⁴⁸ For Christian feminists the cross is the ultimate sign of servanthood, not subordination. Christ was not defeated through the cross but overcame all the powers of evil by his radical obedience to God. They contend that just as in the Old Testament--where God is referred to as the helper ('ezer) of Israel and the people are God's servants⁴⁹--so every Christian is called to be a free servant of God and God's people. Letty Russell points out that:

Regardless of what the role of servant has come to mean in the history of the church and society, in the Bible it is clearly a role of honor and responsibility to take part in God's work of service in the world. Women and men are called by God in Jesus Christ to be both servants and apostles as representatives of the new humanity. In this view the real scandal of being a servant or representative is not that of subordination but of suffering. The cost of representation in the midst of oppression is the suffering of God, and of men and women for others.⁵⁰

Christian servanthood is thus service and not suppression of one's gifts. In the parable of the talents, Jesus denounced the servant who hid his one talent.⁵¹ Christian feminists, in the same vein, decry the loss of resources many of the churches have suffered on account of the suppression of women by the male hierarchy.⁵² They believe that the hierachial structure which exists in many of the churches must be abolished, so that

⁴⁷ Russell, p. 87; Jewett, pp. 94-103.

⁴⁸ Russell, p. 137.

⁴⁹ Ps. 121:2, 124:8, 146:5; Trible pp. 35-36. ⁵⁰ Russell, p. 142.

⁵¹ Matt 25:14-30. ⁵² Scanzoni and Hardesty, pp. 169-181.

the Body of Christ might be liberated from an impoverishing sexism.⁵³

These feminists argue that if authority is given on the basis of one's position in the church, the men will continue to control the church, passing on their authority mainly to men who resemble their predecessors in their biases and prejudices. They would like to restructure the church so that a person's position and authority in the church would be determined by their gifts, not vice versa.

ETHICS FOR CHRISTIAN FEMINISTS

While the Traditionalists reaffirm the patriarchal structure of the church and while the radicals form new 'sisterhoods,' Christian feminists reject both of these alternatives, but have yet to develop their own ethical model. Paul's therapeutic community-based ethics may offer a bridge between the present hierachial church and the liberated church of the future. His ethics is neither reactionary nor utopian, but strives to balance order with freedom in the church. Even more important is the fact that therapeutic community-based ethics does not have some of the major weaknesses of 'feminist' or liberation ethics. Paul's ethics is based on Christian love and thus does not advocate non-Christian strategies of separatism⁵⁴ and anger.⁵⁵ Unlike the liberation theologians, Paul cannot be criticized for minimizing women's liberation by subsuming it under the umbrella of human liberation.⁵⁶ Paul's ethics focuses on the local churches and their practical problems. His perspective is neither pluralistic nor global. As a community-based therapist he is interested

⁵³ Russell, p. 155f. ⁵⁴ Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 380-384.

⁵⁵ Collins, p. 186. ⁵⁶ Daly, Beyond, p. 5f.

in healing the churches of their illnesses, rather than trying to change the social order.

The Pauline Understanding of Order

The traditionalists, provoked by the radical feminists, fear that the church will be devastated if the patriarchal order is renounced.⁵⁷ They are unable to separate the church from its present structure. Paul's therapeutic community-based ethics provides a way to preserve the life of the church while altering its prevailing order. Paul, in fact, never questions the survival of the church, but he does envision the Body of Christ as being in continual need of re-evaluation and therapy.

The root of the dispute between the traditionalists and Christian feminists can be traced to their conflicting definitions of order. The traditionalists espouse a medieval concept of hierachial order that bears no resemblance to the Pauline concept of order in the church. Paul compared the church to a functioning human body, not to a rigid Egyptian pyramid. For Paul, the church was not a hierarchy but the living Body of Christ on earth. Each Christian had an important role to play within the church. These ministries were assigned on the basis of the person's spiritual gifts, not on his or her status in the community. He even states that:

the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indespensible, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Elisabeth Elliot, cited by Lindsell, p. 45.

⁵⁸I Cor. 12:22-25.

Paul's organic model of the church has no place for a hierarchy. He believes that a congregation is healthy only when each member is using his or her own gifts for the benefit of the whole church. If individuals' abilities are suppressed, the whole body is stunted and stagnates.⁵⁹ But, if the Christians use their gifts without regard for one another, the body becomes chaotic. In Corinth the glossalalists babbled incomprehensibly, drowning out the prophets. Women disrupted the worship services with their questions and unveiled heads. The knowledgeable scandalized the immature by their eating and drinking habits.⁶⁰

The effects of this disorder were seen in the factionalism in the church and the scorn their conduct received from unbelievers.⁶¹ Paul contends that the Corinthian church is no longer a healthy organism; it is disintegrating. Paul believes that the primary cause of their decline is the Corinthians' preoccupation with their own spirituality. The Corinthians are no longer trying to be Christ to each other and to unbelievers; they have forgotten that the greatest gift of the Spirit is love.⁶²

The Pauline Understanding of Freedom

Therapeutic community-based ethics attempts to balance order with freedom. The call for freedom in the church is as necessary as the need for order. The problem is that freedom has been alternatively defined as self-actualization⁶³ and as voluntary subordination.⁶⁴ Paul's ethics affirms

⁵⁹I Cor. 12:26. ⁶⁰I Cor. 11, 14. ⁶¹I Cor. 5:1-2, 14:23.

⁶²I Cor. 13:1-13. ⁶³Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 388.

⁶⁴Yoder, p. 192.

each Christian's freedom without valuing personal growth over the upbuilding of the Body of Christ; nor does it justify the repression of women's spiritual gifts for the sake of the established order.

Mary Daly's definition of freedom as "Self-assuring and Self-centering"⁶⁵ could not be further removed from Paul's concept. For Paul, freedom is being set loose from the bonds of a capricious self-centered ego.⁶⁶ The Christian is free to love and serve others because of Christ's death and resurrection. Christian freedom is oriented toward the community of faith. A Christian is, therefore, free to lay down his or her life for another.

Freedom is thus essentially an expression of the life of the Spirit.⁶⁷ It is the freedom to serve the Spirit of God. A Christian who denies his or her own spiritual gifts or those of another is, thus, denying the freedom of God to give gifts as God pleases. The problem with the traditionalists' definition of freedom as "voluntary subordination"⁶⁸ for women is that it not only denies women's leadership abilities, which have been given them for the growth of the church, but also sets women aside as an inferior group. This view is remarkable in light of the fact that even a cursory look at the Bible reveals the fact that numerous women have been gifted with: wisdom (Abigail), prophecy (Deborah), administration (Chloe), and teaching abilities (Priscilla).⁶⁹ Paul describes this quenching of the Spirit as sinful and destructive to the church.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 388. ⁶⁶ Romans 1:21-32; 6:16-23.

⁶⁷ Romans 8:1-11. ⁶⁸ Yoder, p. 192.

⁶⁹ I Sam. 25:24-42; Judges 4 and 5; I Cor. 1:11; Romans 16:3; Acts 18:2.

⁷⁰ I Cor. 12:14-26; I Thes. 5:19f; Romans 12:6.

When this definition of freedom as suppression and subordination is applied selectively to one group in the church, the whole ethic of Christian love is reduced "to the morality of victimization."⁷¹ The Body of Christ is no longer defined according to the function of each member, but it is divided into "super- and sub-ordinate"⁷² parts. Even Paul's dictum to honor the so-called "less honorable"⁷³ parts is reversed so that women are counseled to be passive and accepting of their inferior status and men are urged continually to take control of every situation.⁷⁴ Domination and submission replace the love which Paul spoke about in I Corinthians 13, a love which "does not insist on its own way."⁷⁵

The Pauline Understanding of Christian Love

Mary Daly is quite correct to describe Christian ethics as "a sacrificial love morality."⁷⁶ For Paul, Christian behavior is founded on "the faith affirmation that God himself suffered for man's (sic) sake to reconcile the world in Christ."⁷⁷ Even wisdom and miraculous signs are subservient to "the power of the cross."⁷⁸ Christ's self-sacrificial love is not only the cornerstone of the Christian faith, but also the model for Christian ethics. Throughout I Corinthians, Paul continually reminds the community that "No one should seek his or her own good, but the good of the neighbor."⁷⁹ He even goes so far as to insist that a Christian's

⁷¹Daly, Beyond, p. 105. ⁷²Barth, III/4, 169f. ⁷³I Cor. 12:23.

⁷⁴Barth, III/4, 169-172. ⁷⁵I Cor. 13:5. ⁷⁶Daly, Beyond, p. 105.

⁷⁷Daly, Beyond, p. 105. Citing Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 156.

⁷⁸I Cor. 1:17-2:5. ⁷⁹I Cor. 10:24.

diet be determined by the sensitivities of an unbelieving host⁸⁰ or by the scruples of an immature Christian.⁸¹ For Paul, love means the willingness to imitate Christ, to lay down one's life for another. This is not just an ethic for martyrs, but for everyone. Every Christian is called to be a witness to the self-sacrificing love of Jesus the Christ. Christian love, however, is not simply the willingness to renounce one's own preferences for another. According to Paul, this is only the prerequisite for loving one another. Mature love seeks to strengthen and reach out to others. It calls forth and affirms each member's spiritual gifts.⁸² No person in the church should, under the pretense of charity suppress or abrogate the abilities of another Christian. Otherwise self-sacrifice can easily become an "unrealistic and destructive moral idea,"⁸³ which encourages mature Christians to repress their gifts and discourages immature Christians from growing beyond their prejudices.

The Presuppositions of Paul's Ethics

Paul's therapeutic ethics offers a way to maintain order while renewing the structure of the church. His basic assumptions--that all people are morally ill, that behavior reflects the state of the soul, and that practical applications are as important as speculative theories--provide a groundwork for reforming the church without encouraging anarchy.

Therapeutic ethics assumes that all human beings are morally ill. All people are oppressed by sin and everyone is in some way an oppressor. Thus, there is no justification for Christian feminists to separate from

⁸⁰I Cor. 10:27-29. ⁸¹I Cor. 8:7-13. ⁸²I Cor. 14:1.

⁸³Daly, Beyond, p. 105.

the sinful patriarchial church, for they are also sinners. Anger should always be tempered by the awareness that the accusers also are in need of healing.

This healing process, however, is not accomplished merely by changing the structure of the church. Therapeutic ethics presupposes that behavior reflects the state of one's soul.⁸⁴ Thus, restructuring the churches will correct an injustice, but it may not touch the source of patriarchy, the believers' biases against women in leadership. Education, experience and prayer are also required so that the cause, as well as the symptoms, of sexism may be vanquished.

Lastly, Paul emphasizes that a practical solution to a particular problem is more important than a theoretical ideal. Neither the traditionalists nor the Christian feminists are going to be able to implement their ideal image of a church. The stability of the church depends on each group struggling with the other group in order to reach practical solutions to the problem of sexual equality in the church. No group can assume that its goals are too sacrosanct for modification or compromise.

Therapeutic Strategies

Paul used four basic strategies for implementing his therapeutic ethics:

- (1) The strength of the prescription should be adjusted in accordance with the problem.
- (2) There are many sources for ethical maxims.

⁸⁴See Chapter II.

(3) Popular opinion is often misleading.

(4) There are exceptions to every rule.⁸⁵

These guidelines may prove helpful in our present struggle for freedom and order in the church.

The willingness to adjust the remedy to the severity of the situation is crucial in this age when churches are quite willing to split over such issues as the ordination of women. Frank Patton's suggestion, in 1975, that Episcopal women priests bring their church before the state courts for justice⁸⁶ is a clear example of prescribing a cure that might cause more damage than it rectifies. A much more therapeutic method has been temporarily worked out by the Episcopal Church whereby each diocese is allowed to choose whether or not it will accept women priests. This is obviously a stop-gap method, but for the time being it allows women an opportunity to use their gifts and further educate the people in their diocese, without unnecessarily forcing a confrontation.

Just as Paul based his ethical exhortations on a wide variety of sources, women are encouraging the church to adopt new models. The hierachial model is being supplemented in many places by team ministries, ministerial couples and communal ministries. Women are also trying to break down the barriers between the clergy and laity by emphasizing the priesthood of all the believers.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See Chapter II for a comparison of Paul's ethical strategy with Plutarch's.

⁸⁶ Frank Patton, "Women's Ordination: Should Church Disputes Go Civil." Christianity and Crisis, XXXV, 15 (September 29, 1975), 214-217.

⁸⁷ Georgia Harkness, Women in Church and Society (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 226f; Scanzoni and Hardesty, p. 176.

The stereotypes of male and female roles in the church are gradually being redefined by Christian feminists. The feminists are slowly changing the popular opinions regarding women as church leaders. The latest studies from the United Presbyterian Church and the American Baptist Churches report a growing acceptance of women as pastors and leaders of the church.⁸⁸

But, the United Presbyterian Church reports that in spite of Biblical and ecclesiastical precedents, 16.6% of their churches still have not appointed a woman elder.⁸⁹ According to the American Baptist study, only 69% of the people say that they would accept a woman as a pastor, despite the fact that this denomination has been ordaining women for over one hundred years.⁹⁰

Paul's final strategy is perhaps the most prudent. The apostle contends that there is an exception to every rule. There may be denominations that are unable to accept women in leadership roles. Perhaps the Amish are the best example of a church that might not be able to survive any change in its rigid policies. There may also be forms of ministry that should retain the separation of the sexes, such as the monastic life. These exceptions do not disprove the value of Paul's therapeutic ethics, but only serve to emphasize its adaptability to varying circumstances in different ages.

⁸⁸Penelope Morgan Colman and Ann Dubois Conrad, "Resource Book for Placement Acceptance and Support of Clergywomen" (report of Vocation Agency, UPCUSA, New York, 1978); Edward C. Lehman, Jr. and The Task Force on Women in Ministry of the Ministers Council, American Baptist Churches, "S.W.I.M.: A Study of Women in Ministry." (report issued by the Minister's Council of the American Baptist Churches, Valley Forge, 1979)

⁸⁹Colman and Conrad, p. 1. ⁹⁰Lehman, p. 24.

CONCLUSION

This effort to resurrect Paul's therapeutic ethics is much more than an attempt to justify "an author long dead."⁹¹ I believe that Paul's therapeutic community-based ethics provides an ideal model for balancing our need for order in the church with a recognition of women's spiritual gifts. Paul's approach toward human behavior is not the only ethics available to Christians. John's gospel and the Pastoral Epistles might embody different ethical models, and there are many contemporary models for Christian ethics. I have chosen to analyze Paul's ethics because of its equally steadfast concern for the stability of the church and for freedom in the Spirit. It is my hope that the American churches can learn from Paul how to maintain order while granting women full membership in Christ's Body.

⁹¹Daly, Beyond, p. 5.

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